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THE WEAL OF THE CHURCH

AND

THE NEED OF THE TIMES.

BY

GEORGE STEWARD.

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PREFACE.

THE motives of a writer are of far less consequence to his readers, than the staple of his thoughts, and the style of his performance; they may receive his impressions, but cannot share his obligations. But though motives pass unchallenged, every work of man must bear witness to some design. A book is a mental offspring, and must exhibit the characters of its filiation to the public eye: hence an author can hardly be supposed to affect the shades of society; worthily, or otherwise, he claims publicity, and to his own apprehension, at least, stakes something on his enterprise. It is then too late to ponder the maxim, "quid valeant humeri;" since, whatever be the breadth of his shoulders, he must be pre-

pared to stand or fall under the burden which public judgment may lay upon him. It is vain for him either to sue for the favour of general readers, or to seek to mitigate the severity of critics: he must confide his progeny to those fortunes which its merits and contingencies may assign; just as persons and things are left to make their own way through the world.

At the risk, however, of an act of self-humiliation being imputed, if not of incurring a suspicion on his sincerity, the author ventures to forestall, what to many, on reading his pages, will become sufficiently apparent:—the evidences of both imperfect training, and imperfect practice, in the business of authorship—a want of order and compactness. In explanation, perhaps extenuation of these faults, he simply records the fact, that his papers were written during occasional intervals of leisure, snatched from the pressing engagements of a busy ministry. They spread over more than two years. The plan

and trains of thought, thus interrupted, were resumed when all but obliterated: the suture can hardly be concealed, uniting the old with the new; differences of colour and of pattern may be detected wherever the loom has slumbered.

In the earlier parts of the book, events are referred to, which have already faded from public view: disease, famine, revolutions, or commercial troubles, now seem like entries by the hand of time, concealed by an intervening leaf, bearing other entries, with the ink still wet. On some points, too, the writer's own sentiments have been somewhat altered (may he say developed?) by the more recent course of public events. The large references to Methodism found in the book are the dictates of experience, as well as the records of affection to that Church which has formed for the writer the sphere of his own public life.

Of the topics themselves, which he has ven-

tured to handle, he conceives far more loftily than of his own performance. Other minds, of higher reach, may subject them to a profounder analysis, or draw them out into a greater amplitude of practical detail; but such an admission is not one of jealousy but of desire. Small stores, and small contributions, however separately insignificant, serve to swell the ever-accumulating wealth of truth, and the homage due from universal mind to the sovereignty of religion.

LONDON,
August 1*st*, 1850.

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THE WEAL OF THE CHURCH

AND

THE NEED OF THE TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

THE SPEECH OF GOD.

"I have heard thy speech and was afraid."—Hab. iii, 2.

It may be remarked that where mere reason and philosophy end, there revelation only begins. The being of God, the powers of his nature, and the course of his rule,—facts, which these with difficulty reach, and at best but poorly scan,—revelation assumes and familiarizes, without parade of demonstration, or air of discovery. It tacitly appeals to, and builds upon, the instincts, beliefs, and experiences of our nature,—upon the primeval traditions of which itself is the depositary,—and upon the whole range of objective being, which is but its own faithful echo. It seems to decline challenging the atheist, while it condescends to expostulate with the idolator; as though the first, demented by so flagrant an impiety as that which disowns a God, must be recovered to the integrity of reason, ere he can become a disciple of religion: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."

In keeping with this, its peculiar recognition of the first great truth of religion, is its assumption of its own character. Revelation is self-announcing, bold, and familiar. It leaves the whole task of objecting to its foes, and that of apology to its friends; it calmly takes its position and proceeds to

its ends. It does not speak of God more familiarly than of itself as his oracle to the world. God and the Bible are joined together as facts correlative and inseparable. It nowhere betrays the carefulness of distrust lest its claims should fail in argument, or to make their way through the world. The whole cause of Revelation is by itself ultimately committed, not to the Church, to the priesthood, or to traditionary or prescriptive influence, *but simply to its own truth.* All its measures for maintaining itself against adversaries, and for securing its ascendency among mankind, spring from this one characteristic—its self-declaring truthfulness,—which may also be viewed as an implied prognostic of its final triumph. This observation may be applied to the class of sacred writers called Prophets. Judging from the tenor of their writings, these were at no pains to demonstrate the authority of their office, or the reality of their gifts, to their people. This fact implies that both were publicly recognised, and that though occasion might arise in which a public judgment was invited respecting the legitimate claimants to the office, no doubt existed respecting the office itself. Not only did the religion of the nation authenticate it, its history abounded in signal instances of its vindication, and its sacred lore was enriched and amplified by a series of the loftiest contributions. The very succession of the prophetic order tended to preserve in the mind of the nation the impression and appreciation of its mission; which bias, though doubtless abused by impostors, for the sake of honour or gain, rather advanced than injured the true prophet by comparison. His character shone out all the brighter in its glories of integrity, independence and earth-despising sanctity, as the race of worldlings, time-servers, and sycophants, in the guise of prophets, were arrayed against him. Illustrious men! "of whom the world was not worthy," to whom the only earthly awards of the purest patriotism and the noblest public services, were, in general, poverty and persecution, from profligate princes and a backsliding peo-

ple; of whom it is the least praise, that they were master spirits in poetry, eloquence, and sublime writing; that their genius, if consecrated to anything but religion, or had shone anywhere but in the Bible, would have secured for them fame through all ages—as to this day it abides as the most venerable radiance of the Old Testament Church. Yet their true honour was their office. Heaven-descended truth was enshrined in them; their gifts as men were but the ornaments of her temple, as the gold, and the cherubim, were but the garniture of the oracle, and pavilion of the Divine Majesty,—the place of his feet made glorious. The prophets were, in truth, what the Bible terms them, SEERS. They beheld what to all but inspired men must ever be veiled in darkness—the future—whether it respects men or things. Their vision was immediately divine, comprising far more than the discovery of another world, or even the future of our own. It penetrated the naturally invisible of being; it darted upward into heaven itself, and the vision *from* God was the vision *of* God, but chiefly of his character as a Supreme Ruler, and of his right and power to punish the guilty.

Moreover, his wisdom is declared in the publication of his designs,—also his merciful disposition toward offenders, and the reluctance with which he proceeds to the work of destruction; while with his threatenings are interspersed so many and pathetic admonitions to the duties of supplication and repentance. The complexion of prophecy is indeed predominantly terrible; it is the reflection of the divine countenance deeply expressive of displeasure, and it abounds in images of judicial majesty which may well strike terror into the stoutest heart. This feature of prophecy, however, is no impeachment of its veracity, nor distortion of the Divine character, but is necessarily derived to it from the condition of the world. It contains revelations of God suited to the relations which his creatures bear to him. It is a correspondence opened, not with innocency, but with guilt,—not

with a loyal province of his empire, but with a race of rebels. Prophecy, as it thus stands, cannot be viewed as possessing only a local and temporary influence on the world,—as an affair of a nation or of an age only,—it is exponent of the divine administration generally. It is a divine mirror, foreshowing the moral images and destinies of nations through a long succession of ages; types of debasement and ruin drawn out in the history of man, from that day to this,—and remaining yet to be fulfilled, not in a few more signal instances, respecting which theory and conjecture may go astray when they would divine the future, but as often as moral correspondences to prophecy shall present themselves to the eye of the great Ruler of nations, and the vials of his wrath shall have been poured upon them accordingly.

In this more extended, but less usual view of prophecy, its vast utility becomes obvious, its divinity brightens on our vision, and its relation to the present and the future, as well as the past, renders it profoundly stirring. With its light thus beheld filling the circle of the world's epochs, it is emphatically prophecy still; and like the sun and moon, on Joshua's great day of triumph, hastes not to go down. The scenes of time, the grand drama in which all nations and even individuals take some part, and to whose catastrophe all contribute something, are never withdrawn from its behests: "Its line is gone forth into all lands, and its words to the end of the world." Thus is its genius not particular, but universal; nor can its interpretation be private, but public. Every separate prophecy is related to the general system, and in fulfilment, as well as character, is blended with it. It is like a solitary fibre belonging to one vigorous and widely spreading root. It is a member of a grand family of inspired truths, ever teeming with historic facts, and accumulating with the progress of ages the proofs of an Almighty governance, and of itself as a record of Infinite Prescience. Hence the design of prophecy is not the instruction of the Old Testament Church so much as of the

New. Remote, rather than proximate ages were to appreciate this branch of revealed truth, and to perceive its force, drawn from a wider field of historic and moral accomplishment. To these, the long vista of antiquity was to appear as if formed by monumental records of prophetic truth, or as a path lettered over with the obsequies of empire, all vocal with its predestinations. To them, the past was as a vast scroll let down by a hand from heaven, to be more and more unfolded with the progress of our race; while the future also, though in many points but the reflection of the past, should be viewed as richer in the promise of a glorious issue, in the fully established reign of Christ, securing the peace and weal of the whole world.

If these observations be just on the scheme of prophecy, it follows, that further discoveries of this kind, as of doctrines, and moral precepts, would be superfluous. The continuity of such a dispensation is opponent to its very nature. A record of principles and of precedents only, was needed for a testimony to all generations; just as selections only are given by the evangelists, of our Lord's discourses, or of the leading personages of early antecedent times. The vision is shut up and sealed, because sufficient light has been shed upon the administration of the Supreme Governor. Fresh and extended examples could do no more than illustrate principles, and enforce the most potent lessons. For instance, no discoveries of the destinies of modern nations, or even of the Christian Church, however authenticated, could add to our knowledge of the actual administration presiding over the world in our day, as in ages gone by.

The perfection and the value of prophecy repose on the doctrine of the Divine Immutability, whether it respects the nature or the issues of the rule of its sovereignty. It is ours only to understand and apply the statements of God's word, to study the inspired precedents it contains, to bring its light upon the living mass of human beings, and upon the wide sphere of their agencies and interests. It is ours

to inherit the wisdom of the prophets, as we do the doctrines of apostles, without pretending to their extraordinary powers; as the spiritual seed of both, though not their official successors, to share with them and the whole Church, whether past, present, or to come, the boon of inspiration without its gift; to drink of the streams of which they are the fountains; to impersonate the truth of the sacred pages in our own individual minds; and to render these ancient oracles lively and vocal in the wisdom and habits of Christian men. To hear the Speech of God is to digest thoroughly the entire moral of prophecy: to compare its sayings, to analyze its descriptions, and to combine them into a sublime, living, practical science. The Speech of God is to us and all men, *his providential action Scripturally interpreted.* It rolls from the firmament in peals of thunder, and is responded to in the murmurs of the heaving, hoary deep. It is heard in the tumult of the storm, and in the melodies of the vernal hour. All nature is but the organ of his voice, and instrument of his will. The vast and the minute, the celestial and the terraqueous, the inanimate and the living portions of the system, all variously speak of him; the physical and the moral departments of providence appropriately declare him. The existence of the human race alone is a mighty oracle of God: the nature and powers of such a creature; his wide diffusion and perpetuated succession; the indefinite formation of individual minds, each of which is a separate world of thought, emotion, and interest; the immortality that dignifies the meanest, and the destinies that impend on life's short breath; the relations that bind men together; the singular diversities of physical and mental character, consisting with a demonstrable identity of origin and blood; the interminable progressions of civilized mind, and the prodigious creations of social energy; the laws of life and of death—of waste and renovation implanted in the mass, and controlling bodies, as well as individual men; the range of dominion given to man;

the exquisite adaptation of his instincts, intellect, and moral powers to his position as one of social dependence, of religious discipline, and of ultimate as well as present interests, are all direct and living expressions of the being and dominion of a God, whose image and subject universal man is; while in the limitations and checks he has placed to the utter triumph of wickedness in man himself,—in the institutions of the social state, in the authority of the moral sentiments, in the rules of conventionalism, the dictates of interest, or the antagonism of the vices themselves,—He has set bounds to the empire of evil, as he has to darkness, or the raging billows of the sea.

In fact, the various modes in which he debates with evil—that fearful power which has a perpetual ascendency over man as he is—traversing by unexpected interpositions its mightiest laws, dissolving or enfeebling its most menacing combinations, and overruling them for the promotion of opposite ends, furnish decisive phenomena in favour of the grand regime which prophecy asserts, and which has its types in the mischiefs which are nature's brood, and the remedies which man is instructed to apply; still, however, limited by such conditions, and subject to such contingencies, as make the sovereignty of the grand Arbiter, in all that concerns human life, most manifest. What is to us chance, is to Him more than foresight,—it is decree. His authority is illustrated, and his voice lifted up, so as to be as "the sound of many waters," or as the noise of a mighty host, by the complicated action of his creation.

His sovereignty is not the less direct because less obvious in many assignable cases, or because his hand is hidden behind the mechanism of surrounding nature, and conveys its stroke by angelic, by human, or even by an unconscious ministry. To imagine that God's wisdom can be frustrated, or his agency intercepted, by the intervention of a system he has expressly contrived to illustrate them, is a dictate of folly equally with irreligion. It is, in fact, not by a succes-

sion of prodigies that his government is carried on, or his glory declared; but in the disposition, actuation, and control of the several orders of his creatures, particularly of moral agents, capable of free, and, seemingly, contrary action; not binding in bonds of necessity a nature emphatically free, but rendering all varieties of its action executive of the predestinations of his wisdom,—so computing and apportioning their respective agencies, as to give to moral powers the balance of various physical forces, as they meet in the composition of suns and systems; and to impress upon the God-like nature of mind, an order of development as peculiarly its own, as are the phenomena of the material universe.

The grand claim of prophecy is not more to anticipate futurity, than to explain facts. Its office is that of a divine interpreter of providential mysteries. It withdraws us from the wide scenes of tumult and disorder, from which bewilderment and scepticism would probably ensue, leading us into the temple where the Divinity is enthroned, uttering his oracles distinctly to the calm and reverent heart: "Be still, and know that I am God." This is the compendium of his teachings, and the perfection of our privilege. This is an immensely superior position for vision than a mountain height which could command the boundaries of all kingdoms, or a tower which contained the archives of creation. We are thus ushered at once into His presence, and see His glory, which grows the fainter as distance is measured from this holy centre; and we hear the majestic voice which worlds obey, and which all creatures equally with cherubim resound, but cannot, like them, articulate. The Temple alone contains the perfect glory, and the perfect oracle, which, in its widening expansion, is broken by intervening hills and dales into feeble echoes; languishing, as it travels, like the dying gale, or melting as music, in the air, when drawn from the strings of an æolian lyre. Hence, to those who possess not this divine and ever-living oracle; and yet more, to those who proudly spurn it as imposture, history and

events speak in vain. They cannot understand the language of providence, nor learn "the manifold wisdom of God," of which the world, and not the church only, is the chosen seat of display. To these the vision is sealed, like the words of the prophet to an irreligious and imbruted people. The interest which should be awakened by this wonderful mystery of God, is as an urgent appeal directed by his voice, through the prophet to a man, delivering him a book; saying, "Read this, I pray thee;" who replies, "I cannot, for it is sealed." And again to another, with a similar request, who says, "I cannot, for I am not learned;" or as it is still more strikingly illustrated by the great book beheld by the seer of Patmos, which it is the Lamb's sole prerogative to open, and office of his church to proclaim to the world. As the plan of creation was a book delivered into the hands of the Son by the Eternal Father, to transcribe into being, and to open a previously inscrutable mystery in the glorious scenes of a material and spirited universe; so is the vast and awful volume of his administration, which has been consigned to him in his last and highest office as the Redeemer of men. The disruption of each seal of its hidden policy, emits a sound which vibrates through the heights and depths of his empire, and is responded to by mighty thunders, and the voices of living creatures. It is the pronunciation of a sovereign fiat—the successive issue of decrees, to which all things haste the response, "It is done," and to crown with the still higher voice of praise: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

Thus it appears that to hear the speech of God, is not the exclusive honour of angels, much less of prophets, or the college of inspired men; it is the honour and the duty of the whole Church of Christ; and it exalts us to the noblest fellowships, both of earth and heaven; agreeably to the

sublimely catholic address of the angel to the beloved John, "I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book." The truth of God, as bound up with the creation, government, and destinies of our world, is the common bond of his servants, and the common heritage of his children; it identifies them with every vehicle of its delivery, and every epoch of its publication. Its recorded facts and principles contain the rudiments of a science to be expanded in higher states of being, and, like God himself, to inhabit eternity and fill the universe.

The single reflection, that it contains the policy of the Supreme Ruler respecting the condition and prospects of a world, may suffice to suggest how low and little all acquisition must be where the track of the Infinite is to be followed, extending over innumerable ages, and traversing every portion of the globe; and also, how inconceivable must be the change in the future capacity and position of the human mind which shall enable it to overtake such a subject as this; to generalize without limit, and to reason without error; when the history of a nation, the events of a century, or even the government of the world, shall be more correctly understood, than are now the concerns of an individual man; and when the analysis of a system so vast and complicated, shall be more perfectly attained than the constituents of an animal or a flower are by the most accomplished man of science.

But it is required that the temper of mind appropriate to the reception of divine oracles be declared: "I have heard thy speech, and was afraid." The expression is indicative of more than mere reverence for the divine majesty, even the impression with which we may conceive the mind to have been possessed by the reception of a divine message, whether conveyed by a voice, by angelic ministry, by vision, or by a certain mysterious impulse from the Divinity, as much distinguished from the mind's own laws of converse

with itself, as is the touch of a fellow's hand from our own, or conversation with another mind by means of the tongue, or even the expression of the face is, from the abstract mental processes going on within, and of which no being is conscious but ourselves.

When an apostle declares of the prophets, "that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," a certain purely internal and strong action of the Divine Spirit on the mind is expressed; an afflatus or breathing upon, as anciently it was expressed, when individuals were described as preternaturally influenced so as to give forth oracles from superior powers. It amounted to a possession of the mind temporally, and for an especial purpose, by the divinity, an ecstacy or entrancement, a brief introduction of the spiritual man to a more vivid and awful sense of the divine presence; or it was a sudden and perfectly distinct conveyance of a message or a fact to the mind of the individual, even while in company with other men, or engaged in the ordinary business of life. Instantly the seclusion of the mind was broken in upon by its Author; the particular train of thought, of feeling, and of purpose, was interrupted, just as it might be by the entrance and communication of a fellow mortal to one when alone. It was suggestion as strong, and as perfectly arrayed in words, as if addressed to the ear itself. It was purely a mental correspondence, which, when closed, left the man in his usual condition of mental independence, and with the obligation to communicate the message without mistake. But whatever mode of communication the Deity chose to employ, it gave the individual intrusted with it a peculiarly sacred character, not only to his fellows, but to himself. The preliminary visitations must have been startling, and some more special revelations, overwhelming. Such were the inaugural visions of Isaiah, of Ezekiel, Daniel, and even the beloved John. One was compelled to utter loudly his woe, while under the burden of the vision revealing to him his corruption, as well as authen-

ticating his commission. Another declares that when he heard the voice that spake with him, he fell upon his face; another, that when he saw that great vision of the political fortunes of the world, but particularly of his own afflicted nation, that there remained no strength in him, and that his comeliness was turned into corruption. John, when he saw him, fell at his feet as one dead; and Habakkuk tells us, that his belly trembled, his voice quivered, and that rottenness entered into his bones. To man, as he is physically constituted, separated from every other order of being beside his own—conscious also of guilt and of moral disorder—supernatural tokens and correspondences become the subjects of scepticism, or the basis of a dark and disturbing superstition. To the one class of minds, constitutionally firm, superficially philosophic, or thoroughly irreligious, man is viewed as perfectly insulated from every nature but his own, and the system of sensible things around him, to the disallowance of every kind of unseen ministry which revelation affirms, and reason might regard as probable; while to them, practically, the Deity himself is converted into a distant and powerless abstraction. By the other class, nature is not regarded with an intelligent confidence,—she is viewed as if perpetually disturbed by the magician's wand;—not so much an embodiment of existence, as the shadow of an occult and unfriendly something behind herself. Her powers are undefined, as objects seen in the twilight, or bedewed by a wintry haze. She abounds in prodigies and portents. Her auguries and divinations peer out everywhere; imagination forms and colours its own gods, and prostrates the trembling spirit before idols of its own creation; "men fear where no fear is." A slavish and heart-withering terror is the penalty of this device of human folly, which supplants the Deity in the trust and homage of his creatures. Even where corruptions of truth do not involve a denial of the grand fundamentals of religion, as in the church of Rome, the indefinite multiplication of subordinate mediators and

tutelary personages, whether in priests on earth or saints in heaven, must brand every form of superstition with the features of a moral tyranny. They are unfriendly to the true liberty and happiness of man: his only rest is in the tutelage of ONE, whose name, expressive of all perfection, is a refuge for the weakness and fears of his creatures; whose universal presence is the extension of a sovereignty limiting the existence and powers of all agency whatever; compeling all to league together for the peace of His people, and to take their stand within the circle described by the bonds of His covenant.

It is the glorious property of an enlightened religious fear, to disabuse the mind of every form of superstitious terror, and to supplant it with the noblest principles. It teaches us to contemn vanities, placing before us One, who is, indeed, "greatly to be feared;" not one among the many claimants for our worship, but One who demands the whole, as his exclusive right. He is not the *chief of the gods,* but "God alone." His being, though the greatest mystery, is the first and necessary truth. His existence *includes* all others, though *excluded from them all.* His essence, fundamental to nature, *is yet no part of it,*—whether consisting of material or spiritual substances expanded into systems, or presented in the many gradations of individual intelligence, or possessing powers of traduction by which an endless succession of things or persons, in exact resemblance, may be derived from a first type. Nature, thus stated, is *not the extension of the divine essence—the communication of Deity to whatever is:*—it is a *creation,* not an *emanation;* a work, not a birth. It is not a spontaneous and necessary issue, a development of some great, eternal principle, and a constituent of its perfection,—but a *performance resulting from design;* from a sovereign predestination deliberating on the "to be" or "not to be," as a question with Itself alone; and also under what conditions and for what ends,—agreeably to the anthem of the elders, "Thou hast created all things;

for thy pleasure they are and were created." He who made all things, necessarily governs all things; and his claims to be feared, equally arise from the illimitable greatness of his being, as well as from the character of his judgments. Nor is it to be forgotten that the highest worship offered to him, as declared in Scripture, is deeply reverential and awful worship. The views which even the most exalted creatures have of him, lead up this feeling to an inconceivable height, imparting a tone of solemnity to their adoration all but burdensome. Fear and religion, in its most perfect and eternal form, will be indissoluble: nor are our own views truthful, but as they inspire us "with reverence and godly fear;" nor the phrase, the feeling, the actions of our religion becoming, but as they are pervaded by the impressions of the awful. How natural, yet sublime, the language, "I heard thy speech and was afraid!"

But the expression has especial reference to the nature of the message conveyed, as well as to the majesty of Him who spake it. They were awful words which God spake. A grievous burden was declared. A vision was opened to the *seer*, which dissolved his soul in terror and dismay. He heard sentence passed on his own loved country, for its inveterate, and irreclaimable wickedness. It was not the destruction of an individual, of a family, or of a city that was threatened,—but of a whole nation. The quarter from which the invasion should arise; the character, array, and overwhelming might of the army commissioned to destroy; the eager onslaught and unmitigable fury of these disciplined and fanatical murderers; the carnage, as well as the conclusion of a warfare, the object of which was spoliation, captivity, and ruin to the conquered party; particularly when the enemy, flushed with a long succession of victories, and proficient in the diabolic arts of licensed cruelty, were enraged by long opposition from their despairing prey, and the almost preternatural efforts of an expiring patriotism—such a vision, and such a sentence, must have been incon-

ceivably affecting to a tenderly patriotic and religious spirit; as in the instances of other prophets, particularly Jeremiah, to whom the tumultuous and appalling scenes of war seemed at hand. The tread and the shouting of the vast hosts were sounding in their ears—clouds of dust, raised by the feet of so many myriads of horses, were the harbingers of their direful approach, as bands of locusts overcasting with darkness the sky of a whole country—a paradise before, and a desert in their rear. But God had summoned them, and his voice was lifted high above this dreadful host, as from the heavenly firmament it falls upon the legions of the sons of light. It is His hand that is stretched forth to destroy, and His sword that thirsts for blood. Cities are captured, pillaged, and burnt, as if in succession seized by a devouring flame—strongholds are demolished by the engines of the siege—the whole country is depopulated and undone. The flocks are forsaken—the ground untilled—the defenceless, hunted, palpitating, remnant flee to the capital, soon gorged by the miserable wreck of a nation's glory. Here famine overtakes them, and the pestilence becomes more cruel than the sword—their strength fails—the instruments of war drop from their hands—even natural instincts and domestic bonds perish in the strife for life; till at length hope itself expires—the enemy as a demon enters, in either hand is his firebrand and his slaughter-weapon—and vengeance stretches its line over the silent, smouldering ruins of gates, palaces, and above all, of the temple itself!

Such, in brief, was the event which filled the prophet with terror and distress—one which, perhaps, (with the solitary exception of its latter counterpart in Jerusalem's destruction by the Romans under Titus) has been followed by no parallel in the history of mankind, fearful as have been the ravages of war, and thick the disastrous vicissitudes which have marked the career of nations: "For this is the purpose," says one, "that is purposed on the whole earth, and this the hand that is stretched out upon all nations."

The august reflection of the prophet on these dismal tidings, cannot be too deeply pondered. "O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment, and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction." "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity."

Such is the fundamental doctrine of the divine economy, and the grand oracle of prophecy, echoed and re-echoed from the dark, agitated abyss of the world's political condition, and prolonged from age to age, as if in response to the antiphon of seraphs, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." To swell this proclamation, the voices of all lands have joined, and the whole creation, which "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." These hurricanes which have swept over the bosom of the world's society, evoking forms of terror from its chaotic mass—in the career and the issue of invasion —the fresh distribution of territory, and the transfer of power into other hands—the scourges of famine—the deadly waftings of the breath of pestilence, hurrying multitudes to the grave— the permission of many and afflictive social evils —the various contingent mischiefs blending with public good, in the development of mind and the progress of society —the reverses which overtake communities and families, as well as individuals, in the career of prosperity, against which no foresight can provide—the bright visions of coming advancement and general happiness, so often exchanged, as a fair morning for tempest and rain—the grievous failure of legislation and statesman-like sagacity in providing remedies for acknowledged evils, or promoting the national weal,— are all punitive demonstrations of the Holy One. He has ordained them for judgment, and established them for correction. There is no nation on the face of the earth where his signs have not been displayed, within the memory of the living generation. They have been beheld in the political hemisphere of Europe, traced as in characters of fire and lines of blood. It has been a theatre upon which all

its nations have been summoned to take their stations, and to act their parts. National convulsions and social changes have happened, which, for number and the magnitude of their effects, have been unequalled in the history of mankind. Nations have been permitted to exhaust themselves in long, expensive, and sanguinary wars. The line of the battle-field has been drawn around every European state but our own; and the gigantic contests in which all mingled for nearly a quarter of a century, shook the mightiest kingdoms to their centre, and filled all ranks of citizens with astonishment and dread. Nor has the great, but we may fear the almost unconsciously enjoyed blessing of a profound and almost universal peace, which seems to have followed this horrible era of strife, as if, by some angel's hand, the demon of destruction had been bound with a chain and cast into the bottomless pit, been, at least, as yet, like the opening morning of the latter-day glory. Peace, though it has multiplied the nations, has not proportionably "increased the joy." Social evils, to a great extent, remain uncorrected; and notices of public discontent, and political instability, frequent and widely spread, show that an element is yet wanting to the thorough well-being of the most civilized communities, which neither intelligence nor patriotism can supply; and the virulent workings of a disease which yields to no remedies of merely human origin.*

Nor can we pass over the more rare, yet more striking, oracles of judgment which God has spoken to the nations.

In recent times, he has spoken in a mysterious and mortal disease, which, issuing from the far-distant east, bestrid seas and continents with murderous haste, as the very personification of that being who slew the first-born of Egypt—charged with the dreadful commission to devastate the whole earth. At his rumoured approach from the same quarter, and pursuing his former track, the voice of alarm is still sounding; the rattling of his quiver has been heard in countries com-

* Written before the late Continental convulsions.

paratively near to our own, and the poison of his shafts has already entered many a victim's heart. A warning has been loudly uttered to prepare for a visitation, to avert which, all human power is as unavailing as that which would divert the course of the wind, or as that of David and his people, when the avenging angel had drawn his sword over their devoted land.*

Nor should it be forgotten how menacing and monitory were the aspects of Providence during the past year; how portentous were the signs of divine governing displeasure; and how powerfully were the lessons of human dependence upon the mercy of God, for the very means of life's subsistence, reiterated. After a long succession of years of plenty, during a season of profound peace, with all the advantages of international communication, and with every stimulus given to commerce by the prospect of unlimited gains, how nearly was Europe reduced to the horrors of a famine! how tardily did the year seem to revolve till the supplies of the coming harvest were secured! and with what interest and anxious anticipation were the appearances of the growing blade regarded! The joy of harvest, in this instance, was heightened by the feelings which arise from an escape from an impending calamity, whose shadow had been spread over a continent, and whose weight would have crushed the strength, and consigned much of the life of empires to the dust. At this season the mercy that mitigated the visitation, was as striking as the power that brought it upon the nations; while the sudden, and perfect arrest of the ordinance, was more impressively instructive than were the severity of its effects.*

In an age of expanding activity, of advancing and popularized philosophy, of general application of talent to every question involving human interests, or the possible developments of nature's resources, the subsistence of the immense

* Each of these references is now considerably post-dated: when written they were nearly synchronic.

masses of humanity, comprising nations, which is in reality so grand a display of the Creator's beneficent power, was regarded as a common and unappreciated fact, the explanation of which was to be found in the unchanging efficacy of natural laws, aided by the industry and the art of man. Of these there was no felt distrust, or suspicion of contingent results; no realizing belief of the simple instrumentality of nature as the work of an Almighty Being, and of its strict subservience to His will, much less of His providence being a demonstration of His *moral* empire over man, and a system for upholding it. Upon the extinction of idolatry, the tendency of the mind, especially when in a progressive state, is toward a practical and even speculative atheism. An extended acquaintance with physical science, as implying the knowledge of secondary causes, brings to the inquiring mind a satisfaction, and a rest, which render the grand doctrine of a First Cause less a subject of interest. Everything is accounted for, on natural grounds only; supernaturalism, and sovereign interposition, are suppositions practically discarded, or even theoretically so, because it is imagined, that the existing system thus opened to man may operate every phenomenon without them. In this condition of European mind, we cannot be at fault to divine the especial reason and end of the late remarkable visitation. It was the sudden and loud enforcement of the doctrine of a morally corrective Providence, which had well-nigh slipped away from the cognizance of men, and by many impiously denied—a revelation of God in his grand characters of a Benefactor, and Governor over the world—a truth to which men had slept, while intent only upon securing the general or individual good of the present life, or idolatrously doting upon the all-sufficiency of man himself.

In the absence, or only partial diffusion of religion through the world, it remains for God to enforce its lessons by his providence; to vindicate the truth of his word by appeals to sense, and to maintain his authority by a public controversy

with the nations. It is by overt, and perhaps terrible, action that he seeks to right this great doctrine, on which all religion depends, in the sight of the world; to restore it to the supremacy from which it has been deposed; to rebuke men for their idolatrous, or atheistic imaginings; to bring down their lordly pride and towering impiety to the dust; to show that HE giveth "life, and breath, and all things;" and that guilt has no shield which can repel his weapons, and his creatures no power to screen themselves from his displeasure, but in the supplications that disarm his vengeance, and constrain his pity.

The proper temper with which to regard these, and similar events, is that of deep, practical reverence for God, and the evidences of his moral administration. They embody Bible doctrines, they verify prophecy, and are intended to bring His truth with freshness and power to the heart. The true Christian temper is utterly remote from melancholy, or misanthropy. It is not that stern and unsympathizing mould of feeling, which might be created by a specific and known sentence of destruction, passed upon a people, such as that which Joshua knew to have issued against the seven nations of Canaan; or which prophets were required to pronounce publicly against their own, or contemporary kingdoms. It is no harsh, dogmatic temper, impatient of controversy, on the application of principles mutually allowed; or arrogating to itself infallibility in discerning "the signs of the times." It does not exclude the testimony of the past, or the present, in favour of the brighter aspects of the divine economy; or the weight of the doctrine which places the affairs of the world solely in the hands of the Mediator. Nor is it unmindful, that the Apocalypse is the Lamb's own book; and that, though its trumpet blast forth notes of terror, and the angels, bearing vials of wrath, proclaim successive woes, the rainbow surmounts the throne, and smiles in varied brightness above the wild avenging storm. It is fear, not inconsistent with confidence and hope, holding no affinity with

superstition, or mawkish dread. Its effect is not to enthrone despondency, or to paralyze effort. It prompts alike to prayer, and exertion—enhancing the value of an interest with Supreme Power, from the known certainty of the prevalence of intercession. It magnifies the promises in our eyes, and while it bows us in the dust, imparts vigour to the grasp, which takes hold of even Jehovah's strength—and moves the Power that sways the world.

CHAPTER II.

THE WORK OF GOD.

"O Lord, revive thy work."

THE expression, "thy work," is applicable to providential movements, particularly to judicial exactions; yet more eminently it is applicable to religion, viewed both in its form and principle. Undoubtedly its primary reference here is to the polity of the Jewish people. It glances at the patriarchal covenants of which they were the heirs. At their birth in, and disentanglement as a nation from, the land of Egypt, by a series of prodigies, terrible and all compelling—an event graphically described by Ezekiel, chap. xvi.

Their political and ecclesiastical economies were immediately God's creation; and, agreeably to this idea, the prophetic language is framed, "I have made thee, I have formed thee, I have created thee:" that is, in the peculiar sense of a separated and covenant people. We have only to refer to the inspired books, containing their history and the law delivered to Moses, the tables of stone engraved by the finger of God, the ark and the tabernacle, with all their precious furniture, made precisely according to a divine pattern, to perceive the truth of this remark. The nation was neither settled nor governed—but by the immediate super-

vision of a divine sovereignty. Its constitution could not be infringed, its institutions admitted no modifications. A divine immutability was stamped upon the priesthood, to transgress which involved the evidence and guilt of apostasy. The exact and unswerving obedience of all was imposed by a solemn compact; their polity, both in church and state, bore the glory of a theocracy, a glory never shared by any other people. Their very territory was held by a divine title, and their whole social fabric so compacted by divine art, as to stand or fall together. The prayer of the prophet, therefore, to God to revive, or, perhaps, more literally, to keep alive his work in the midst of the years, plainly points to the approaching disaster of the captivity, and its apprehended peril to the existence of his people: at least with their ancestral faith, and covenant institutions, during so unprecedented a trial. The prayer seems to include a desire for the nation's preservation, politically and religiously, when expelled from its home soil, and suffering a strange infraction of its organization, and suspension of its vital functions, whether in church or state.

To human apprehension it might have become finally extinct, as a tree torn from its hold on its native earth, and broken by the fury of the blast, as well as the superincumbent weight of its foliage, becomes incapable of being replanted, and lies a wreck where it fell. Considering the condition of the captivating power, the completeness with which they had done the business of destruction, the improbability that the condition of the political world would be so altered as to allow the return of any portion of the poor captive race to their country; but especially considering the inveterate corruption of the people themselves, their desperate proneness to idolatry, and the temptations under which they would lie to abjure the religion of their forefathers, and for convenience and favour to symbolize with the superstitions of their conquerors; this was no ill-grounded apprehension.

To this crisis the prophet looked forward as one without a parallel in the history of his nation—the captivity of the ten tribes only excepted—of whose return to their land, to form an independent kingdom, there was not the smallest hope. The dread of such an issue was oppressive, and the prophet supplicates, on the most prevalent ground of appeal to God, for a mitigation of the judgment, and a restoration from the captivity, *that they were his own work.* Their ancestry, history, and destiny, stood alone in glory in the annals of all time; their sins and deserts had been aggravated beyond all example; but their destruction was deprecated, on the consideration that God's own work would in them be destroyed, and his glory obscured in the eyes of after generations; as it would have been by their destruction in the wilderness, when Moses so touchingly interceded for, and obtained their pardon.

Nor can it be reasonably doubted, that the entreaties of prophets, together with the whole company of the faithful in the nation, often, indeed, but a small residue, both before and during the darkest period of the nation's fortunes, carried the cause of the restoration with God, as well as procured favourable tokens while the dispersion lasted. The revival of his work, thus prayed for, was probably signified in connexion with private, or joint supplication,—and at various seasons, in new or amplified promise. It seems, too, highly probable that religion, in a spiritual and personal sense, was greatly revived during the years of the captivity; and that this prolonged term of all but national extinction, was rendered more fruitful in examples of individual godliness, and in the production of a genuine reform, than had been the efforts of their best kings, or the alternate disasters and returns of prosperity which their history sets forth. The visitation which depopulated and scattered them was as the excision of the branches of a vine or fruit-bearing tree, too extensively blighted or cankered to be remedied by the application of the pruning-knife,—all must be re-

moved but the root and stock, which afterwards send out a healthy progeny of branches to replace the former, and to bear fruit in abundance; or it was as the oriental custom of threshing the sheaf, by exposing it to the heavy, crushing tread of oxen, after which the operation was perfected by the shovel lifting the contents of the floor to the action of the wind, which speedily dissipated the chaff, leaving the clean grain in store for use.

Thus the dire measure of the captivity was the sole remaining expedient for preventing the destruction of this corrupt people. The nation, ruined in its political interests, despoiled of its sovereignty, wealth, and power, and reduced numerically to a mere handful of people, was purified and regenerated by this terrible process; and, to use another prophet's language, the "holy seed" was "the substance thereof," though it was "as an oak" whose leaf had fallen, or as the "teal tree" when browsed by the cattle. The basis of a long, and, comparatively, religious restoration, was laid by this harmonious operation of the providence and the Spirit of God.

A new race of men, schooled and reared in the shades of adversity, sprang up, who carried from Babylon to Judea a treasure infinitely more sacred and precious than the vessels of silver and gold which Nebuchadnezzar had pillaged from the temple, in the days of their fathers:—the treasure of principles acquired under the rod of the divine correction, and the hand of the Spirit—a deep detestation of idolatry, and a lasting repudiation of heathenism, which, like a serpent, had fascinated their forefathers with its eye, and destroyed them with its poisoned sting. With all their faults they never reverted to this evil. To their law, religion, and polity they were ever after enthusiastically attached; their Scriptures were held in the highest veneration, and guarded with the most scrupulous care. Their heroism in defence of these most valued interests in after times was never surpassed; and multitudes of them, in times of persecution,

suffered death, in its most revolting forms, rather than abandon their faith, and defile their consciences with spiritual adultery.

The work of God, in every age, is emphatically HIS CHURCH, founded, first, upon the promise of the Messiah; and, secondly, upon his manifestation in his person, office, and work. The preservation of the Jews as a distinct people, both from a regard to their history or their religion, as bound up with it, might have been a sufficient object with Divine Providence to insure the answer of the prophetic prayer (itself the very symphony of patriotic and inspired piety); but this, abstractedly taken, could hardly be viewed as paramount. Judaism was not so necessarily to exist on its own account, so much as on account of what should arise out of it. Its grand *future results* were looked to by its Author; and our Lord himself has, in a single sentence, condensed the truth which ruled the whole history and destiny of the nation, as well as declared its glory,—"Salvation is of the Jews." This entail could not be cut off, nor this fruit perish, by a premature destruction of the nation. It was the one boon which the whole world needed, and which was to develop and ripen within this enclosure of divine wisdom, till it might be plucked and handed round the world. This treasure, possessed in covenants, promises, oaths, types, and sacraments, was a divine insurance to the people holding it—an indestructible germ of life. It was, in principle, a resurrection to be repeated as oft as a political death should seize upon them; and, unlike the Apocalyptic vision, reserving its highest glory for the last, rather than the first resurrection.

To preserve and to revive His work, therefore, involved the petition for its last and most sublime issue, in a fully revealed and published Christianity—as the fibrous membranes of a seed enclosing some precious germ, which, though destined to be dissolved in the earth, in the progress of its life, nevertheles scannot be peeled off while it con-

tinues a bare grain, lest the harvest should perish by its mutilation. Conformably with this view, it may be regarded as probable, that the nation's existence is still included in the plan for a fully developed Christianity, as it was in its economic preparation; and that it combines within itself, considered as past and future, the glory of the seed and the harvest together. This cause and effect almost alike range within this one wonderful people, as it respects the Work, immeasurably ahead of every other, in which God manifests himself. Their former restoration was preparatory to the ushering in of the existence of the kingdom of heaven,—their future one, to its final establishment. The one, to the perfect form in which God would unfold his work,—the other, to its grand consummation in the catholic extension and fulness of His church. Thus the prayer may be considered as evangelically prophetic of the second and more dreadful fate of Jerusalem, and the de-nationalization consequent upon that frightful tragedy; when a polity, for ages intact, and associated with every prestige that could insure stability and renown, was destroyed, never to be, in that form, restored; and the church, which stood like the mountain on which its worship was performed with so much magnificence, was overthrown, as with the shock of an earthquake, never to be re-edified on its old foundation. Yet, how wonderfully was the work of God kept alive! A new temple was marked out by the revelation of the Spirit, and by the hands of apostles, ere the old one had fallen, or its lamps and its glory had expired.

In the midst of this olden grandeur, all but defunct, there lay and breathed a new form of heavenly life. From the desolations of Zion there sprang forth a more beautiful and lasting impersonation of Truth. The New Jerusalem was born and cradled as the final effort of a mother doomed either to die, or to suffer the shame and misery of a divorce for her cruel hatred of her own offspring. The event referred to is one of the most extraordinary dispensations of

Providence on record, and in wonderful accordance with the prayer of prophecy,—"in wrath remember mercy,"—which may be understood, either as regarding the end to be answered in the judgment, or the mitigated character of the infliction itself. Considered in reference to the nation at large, it was mixed with mercy, though awfully severe, inasmuch as it did not abound to its utter extermination, but allowed its preservation in a separate form, and with the concomitancy of its peculiarities,—thus impressing, even upon their scattered and uncovenanted condition, the traces of their former greatness as the people of God; like the majesty of an olden royal dynasty, still lingering on the countenances of its humiliated descendants, as the fainter rays of a departing sun, and with presage of their final restoration. Such is the national view of the prayer, and such the answer which Providence has recorded before the eyes of all people.

But the deeper, though secondary, import of it, is found in the immediate subserviency of the judgment to the spread and prosperity of Christianity in the world. The actual preservation of its disciples and leaders during the fatal crisis; the destruction of a body, politic and ecclesiastical, essentially and intensely persecuting; the dissolution of a religious system, whose claims and administration rendered it perniciously fascinating to multitudes professing the Christian name; the Ichabod with which it was branded in the sight of the world; the impaired confidence and zeal with which its advocates could insist upon conformity to its peculiar rites as necessary to salvation; the perfect and independent form in which, from that hour, Christianity stood before the world,—unencumbered, elastic, catholic, in its every mood and feature,—in all its instincts, sympathies, and operations,—"knowing no man after the flesh;" and seeking and estimating only the new creature as its end, and thus more fully qualified to pursue its immediate and chief destiny in its long and wide reception by Gentile nations,—its patrons and propagators

when the representatives of its progenitors should follow it only with their execrations and blasphemies. In these foresights of Almighty God, in behalf of His work, we mark the predominance of His mercy, and the resources of His wisdom, still abounding, as ages have elapsed and centuries closed since the days of its first propagation, as if this prayer was never spent, nor its heritage of answers limited. Its strain has become louder as the voices of apostles have been added to those of the prophets; and these have been swelled into full chorus by those of martyrs, and confessors, and the whole company of the faithful, from that day until now. How constrained, and how pregnant, such a prayer to those who, gifted by the Spirit with deep foresight of the future, beheld the unfolding mystery of iniquity, and reign of "the man of sin,"—who discerned the dense darkness of the middle ages as smoke issuing from the bottomless pit; the devastating career of Abaddon, and his scorpion-tailed horsemen; the death of the witnesses; the desecration of the temple; and the flight of the woman into the wilderness! Supposing the prophetic spirit, given to the apostles, to have afforded them no more light than their writings do to us: yet, how strange, how heart-sickening, must such a future have seemed to them—the long, fitful, horrid interval between their age and the period of final purity and blessedness! With such views, the preservation of religion through so many ages, and so many struggles, could only be hoped for as the result of an ever-remembered, patient, and mighty mercy, bound to the world by the death of the Son of God, and returning the incense of His golden censer, offered with the prayers of all saints, in gusts of blessing on the earth. From this strain of remark, it will sufficiently appear what is meant by the work of God. It is the work of Christ as related by the evangelists, and unfolded by the apostles. It is the redemption of the world by the sacrificial and atoning death of the cross, with every doctrine, influence, arrangement, and instrument arising out of this one great

event. It is Scripturally-revealed Christianity, including the object, medium, and end of faith,—the grand evangelical promise fulfilled to them that believe, bestowing righteousness, or justification, without foregoing works as a condition; and accompanying this free gift to the heart with a vital immission of grace, or rather, making the very revelation of it a substantial conveyance of the entire benefit designed. Justification is His gracious constitution and acceptance of us as righteous, solely for the sake of His Son, and through faith in His blood: it is therefore initiative to, and characteristic of, a truly evangelical state; it is precedent to, and causal of, sanctification, the seed of which is contained in the new and heavenly birth.

In these acts of God the very essence of Christianity is found; this is the new creation, the restoration of the original state and spiritual powers of man—the one source of his happiness and glory. It implies an immediate intercourse with God, a union with His Son, and an indwelling of the Holy Ghost. It is a holy nature, fitted for subjection to a spiritual and perfect law: the moral rudiment of a heavenly state, and the grand palingenesia which includes the resurrection of the body itself. But Christianity extends to visible organization, and to exterior effects. Spiritual though it be in its essence, "it is not unclothed, but clothed upon." It is a living and centre principle, gathering to itself a body, an exquisitely perfect assemblage of members, and instrumental powers. Though intensely individualizing in its operation, it is not isolating; it ordains new relations among men, and sublimates the social nature which it sanctifies, to a correspondence with its own ends. It imposes a new law upon them whom it has cemented into a spiritual brotherhood, and ranks with the most heinous and punishable offences those violations of it which would rend the bonds of this unity, and dismember the Lord's own body.

The *oneness* of all true Christians is reiterated by the

New Testament; and this oneness is affirmed to be the work of the Holy Ghost. Hence the command to keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This description separates the evangelical unity from a mere political conventionalism, a secular despotism, or any artificial form of combination. "The unity of the Spirit" is more than the platform of the church—the inspired ordinance for its creation, or its government; in other words, it is something distinct from, and prior to, its organization and embodiment; it is the very nature, soul, and being of it; and springs out of the mystery of an implanted spiritual life, as do all the forms of social life from the nature of humanity itself. It is the kingdom of God, in its proper economical and moral development; it is nothing brought and added to it, but its own expanded self. It is a fountain overflowing from many little hidden springs, whose individuality is lost in the body of its waters, but whose beneficent copiousness flows in the long, winding, fertilizing river. "The unity of the Spirit" is the gift of a universal soul to the Church, with its proper organization for functions and effects. Its essential unity is the parent of the order intended to maintain it, and to produce its full moral impression on the world. Order again implies law, and its administration, by which only man, in every corporate capacity, can be made mutually helpful; yet, it is not a system of feudalism, but of familyism. Its rulers are brethren, not lords—servants, not masters. Like angels, they have their orders of ministry, their divine liturgy, but with no priesthood or royalty—while their succession is not after a written genealogy, but the voice of the Spirit, as "the wind blowing where it listeth," and leaving only to man the office of verifying His election, and countersigning His title. "The unity of the Spirit," then, considered as the soul and pattern of the church, is consistent with varieties of administration, and differences of theological opinion. It is not broken by such shades of sentiment, and external mould, as do not imply a denial of, or

apostasy from, the Head, the grand term of life—or the lack of the moral glory the Church is to hold up before the world.

Distinct, and somewhat differing communities of professing men, are not incongruous to the idea of a true catholic unity, though perfection is unquestionably approached in proportion as these lines of demarcation become fainter, or are lost in the broad undenominated lines drawn in Scripture, composing the "unity of the Spirit," rather than that of a sect on the one hand, and of constrained, or legal uniformity on the other.

The traces of man's handiwork are, perhaps, nowhere shown so clearly, or so mischievously, as in his ideal transcripts, or practical embodiments of the Church as the work of God: the full truth and spirit of which were never caught by theorists, or ecclesiastical statesmen, any more than nature's life, spirit, and power, are transferable to the marble or the canvass.

The spirit and life of Christianity must be present, or the genuine material of a church, according to the New Testament history and doctrine, is wanting. In its absence, the best compacted forms are only negative things—luxurious perhaps to sense, but inanities to faith—mere shadows, not the moulds of a teeming life—tasteful, but fraudulently artificial, they beguile and destroy the unwary. They engross, but cannot convert; they may enchant their votaries by sympathy with the gorgeous and the imaginative in their symbols and scenic exhibitions, or they may petrify by the drippings of a cold, rationalistic, and merely moral teaching, but leave them destitute of the birthright and blessing of a true evangelism. Moreover, forms, apart from their represented principle, are fixed and immutable things. They do not adjust themselves instinctively to the varieties of religious feeling, as certain instruments employed to signify the changes of atmospheric temperature. They resemble the edifices which admit successive generations of worshippers, without cognizance of either the living or the dead,—or the

bay which never counts the tides that have washed its shores, or the sails that have whitened its waves. Mutability is an attribute of life, plastic in its own forms, and with its own sympathetic signs, just as the characters of the seasons which round the year, or the various phases of animal natures, (particularly the human.) Growth and maturity, health and disease, are phenomena of *life*, not of *death*. Death, as being a negative, is unchangeable; the positive of existence only can run through the scale of degrees. Life's functions and habits are innumerable, but artistic copies of it have a stationary oneness. Dagon, though a god, if unreal, must be set in his place; and Bel and Nebo must be transported on beasts, because they cannot go. So of the artificial in religion,—territorial occupancy, and customal sanction, are all it requires. It needs no revival, because it has no life. Whether true or false, Pagan, Mohammedan, or Christian, so far as each is a traditional, local, and social inheritance, not resting on reason, or adopted from considerate choice, it is simply a national symbol, an element of cohesion, or a component of social perfection: not that it is insinuated that the essential difference is less on that account, but only, that in the simple point of prescriptional influence, they are the same.

The different religions of mankind are geographically defined; and their appropriate symbols in edifices, institutes, and customs, strike the visitor and the tourist, as scarcely more surprising than their distinctions of physiognomy, or of political and social life, all consisting in one great humanized mass. But they are either indigenous unfoldings of the mind, or have been ingrafted upon it by the sword of the conqueror. These disparate, and in general monstrous types of falsehood and crime, undergo no relative or individual changes from age to age; their geographical proportions are almost as fixed as the territories under their presidency, or the nationalities of the people who give them an undying personification. They express the mind of the

world after it has been agitated through untold centuries, and by every conceivable kind of power *derivable from itself*. A multiform, but in its leading features immutable, despotism of evil, has been seated in the world, which requires no reviviscence; it is a "body of death," comprising the whole race: false systems of religion are as necessarily included in it as currents are in the body of the ocean's waters. The true religion may be untruthfully held—treated as an error, or rather worse,—for in the world this preposterous action is incessant, of converting the truth into a lie, and a lie into the truth.

Revival is only appropriate to the *true* religion. It appertains to its life as opposed to systematized death, or to formalism of every kind. It recognises one religion only as the work of God, and God's agency and counsel as necessary to its vigour and extension. Thus it suggests discriminating views on this great subject; it shuts out from the domain of revival all merely territorial extensions of Christianity, irrespective of their Scriptural character and heavenly spirituality. These are separated from the principle of revival by their worldly and ambitious aims—the darnel nature of the seed sown,—the temper in which false principles are propagated,—the despotic, persecuting power which, if successful, they establish,—and the anti-christian effects of their reign upon society at large.

Revival is not then identical with the re-invigoration and spread of a system which embodies great doctrinal errors, despotic tendencies, or the propagation of mere formalism. It is the revival of God's work, Scripturally defined, and operated now, as in the earliest times, without abridgment of privilege, or mutilation of character,—what all men of Scriptural faith, regenerate mind, and holy lives, agree to call RELIGION; including what is fundamental and essential to them all, not the Shibboleth of any party. This, as being a divine thing, is, as man himself originally was, immediately from God. It is termed the new man, and is a production

equivalent to a creation. This attracts the sympathy of all good men; it is truly a living thing, or no concern for its being needed to have been expressed. It is liable to decline, and in its more public form, at least, to die,—or God would not have been supplicated to keep it alive. It is a prayer, catholic indeed,—not that it prompts men to overlook particular churches, or designations of Christianity, merging all special regards in a universality of interest,—but as it teaches them to view all individual churches, or local affinities, in harmony with the greater interest, which is *Christ's* more than it is *ours;* and to value no one body of professing men, but as they combine to promote religion simply as such; and to act, as well as feel, on the principle of universality, just as the eye, the hand, or the foot, to serve the comfort and security of the entire body.

The first duty in respect to these topics, is to ascertain the reality of religious being in any country, or age contemporary. To take broad as well as exact examination, the properties of those instruments which bring a plant or an insect before the eye, should be exemplified by the mind that would investigate the facts of religion, and form conclusions as to its condition in the world. From want of this qualification, or sufficient opportunity for its exercise, serious errors may be adopted by parties holding extreme opinions on the subject. Varying dispositions, as well as pursuits, will tinge with their own hues, the same moral scenery, and plant joy or dejection in the faces of those who simultaneously survey it. The one may be ravished with Pisgah visions; the other, distressed with the features of the desert, or the giant figures of the Anakim: the one, enchanted as Balaam seeing Israel in his tents, or fording Jordan in triumph; the other desponding as he sees him retreating into the heart of the wilderness, or even making towards Egypt again. Doubtless there has been much to countenance both these extremes of feeling on the state of religion in our own and other countries, since the glorious days of the Reformation.

Perhaps in no country, or era of the world, has the course of the Church been so critically eventful, as in England during the last two centuries. A minute and lengthened historic analysis would be requisite to educe this profoundly stirring subject from its obscurity, and to place it in so strong a light as to produce all the desired conviction. Yet may it not be dismissed without observing, that the history of these times cannot be read aright if looked at as a merely political record; or their ecclesiastical affairs but as part and parcel of our economic institutions. The light to be thrown upon this great roll is the sun of evangelical truth. This only reveals the otherwise inscrutable track of the divine footsteps in the fortunes of our country, whose perils and deliverances have been invariably identified with the cause of its faith. By this, as heaven's own beaconary pole-star, has the noble bark held its adventurous course over the treacherous waves in perfect safety, or been greeted by it as the star of morn, ushering in the glorious day to its full. Its break off from the thraldom of the Romish see (an event which, whatever judgment may be passed on some of the agencies called forth to effect it, or on some of the contingencies associated with it) was more to England than its industry could ever earn, or its gold could ever buy—a redemption of its freedom—an influx of wealth unsearchable. It was the holy ark returning from captivity, before which the palladium of superstition fell prostrate, as did the walls of Jericho. Judgment was executed upon the idols, and the darkness of death's shadow vanished from the face of its Shekinah. It brought with it something even more valuable than reform; the seeds of religion were scattered widely through the land, which silently and vigorously grew, moistened by the dew which fell after the tempest was hushed, or by the gentle river gladdening the city of God, "though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea." A spirit was evoked by these furiously contending elements which religion seized and

moulded to her own gentleness, yet combined with indomitable courage and high-born freedom. It flew as a seraph through the land, to purge its temples; but more, to light up its altars—to breath forth incense, and to inspire with song—to war stoutly, but unbloodily, with every high thing exalting itself against the knowledge of God—to sanctify the land, as did Josiah, by burning the very bones and relics of defunct idolatry; or, as Moses, to scatter the dust of the calf upon the waters, after the abomination itself had been dissolved by the flame. Though repelled and persecuted, it endured—it was never quelled: "Cast down, but not destroyed." Chased from sanctuaries, immured in prisons, proscribed as treason, or abhorred as an exorcised demon,—without honour, home, or rights—an exile in its fatherland, and an alien among its brethren; yet to crush it was impossible. It gathered vigour from compression, and might from suffering. Like Israel, under Pharaoh's ban and murderous policy, its children multiplied, until they "filled the land," and bequeathed to posterity monuments of their existence and labours as durable as pyramids, and more ennobling to their country than all the achievements of its sons of prouder fame. In them was impersonated, and kept alive, the true spirit of the first grand Reformers. They were their descendants by a manifest moral affiliation. They arose after them to finish an imperfect work, and to embody fully their archetype. Unlike their great predecessors, whose task was to smite the rock, and to open the fountains for a thirsty, dying host, theirs was rather to work out channels for its diffusive flow, and to give it free currency throughout the land: and if in their primary design they failed, their work was not in vain; if they did not modify the great ecclesiastic institution of their country, they probably did higher service to religion, by the action and reaction of their principles both on Church and State. They maintained and amplified national rights, against tyranny of every kind; and so thoroughly embedded the roots of civil

and religious liberty in the heart of the land, as to show its palmy grandeur more and more, with every succeeding epoch of its existence, till, like the vine brought out of Egypt, "it sent forth its boughs to the river, and its branches to the end of the earth." Under its vast shadow all now repose, and of its fruits all freely partake. Without this tutelage the throne itself were insecure, and the people were not free.

Religion has not only provided a refuge for herself, but a shield for the nation. She has laid underneath it the "everlasting arms," and interwoven its glory and its destinies with her own existence and prosperity. With equal truth, and deeper reverence of feeling, may we regard, as Naboth, the inheritance of our fathers; and, like him, refuse to yield it to the encroachments of prerogative, or the biddings of statesmen. Auction is infamy;—surrender, ruin. Within this hard earned fence, this state enclosure, has God, for ages past, kept alive His work, and caused it to revive and flourish again, when it seemed to sicken unto death.

Religion, if it finds not freedom, creates it. It spurns slavery in every form as uncongenial with itself. How truthful to fact, how transcendent in beauty, is the prophetic picture of it held up by our Saviour in the synagogue of Nazareth!—"He hath sent me to proclaim liberty," &c.—Such was its Jubilee in Palestine, and such is its Jubilee in all nations. Every inferior blessing is attendant upon its liberating march, and springs up into fulness as the redundancy of its grand primary gift. The nations least politically free, are least in harmony with Christianity; their social forms and institutes are exponent only of restraint, and its parent fear wielding power for its own defence. This is the constituency of despotism. Man is degraded by being made the mere tool of arbitrary will; his nature is shrivelled, and his capacity for religion impaired, by this low, crimping action. Christianity, whenever admitted,—if it be indeed itself,—must either destroy these incongruities, or be destroyed by them: it must either proclaim and create its Jubilee, or

be transformed into an instrument of despotism, and issue, more or less, according to circumstances, in the features of Popery. Such is the history and the philosophy of its corruptions. Its servitude is but an apprenticeship to tyranny, and in accordance with the immutable laws of villanage, it retaliates with unmeasured severity its wrongs, when in turn it has ascended the seat of power. Like the air, let it be free, and it is vital and healthgiving; confine it, and it terrifically explodes, or becomes the vehicle of the pestilence.

The existence, propagation, and ascendency of religion in the world, require especial succours, unremitting oversight, and exercises of Redeeming power. Man, as the subject and the instrument of this work, though necessarily intrusted with its accomplishment, is too corrupt, feeble, and unfaithful a being, to do for it all that its importance requires; or even his graciously assisted powers, if tasked as they might, and ought to be, would enable him. The mystery of his moral nature, in connexion with the divine, is as great as that of his physical system, which, though organically and vitally perfect, rests upon a Power greater than itself, for "life, and breath, and all things." Nevertheless, the result of this combination is not necessity, but the indispensable condition of a true moral freedom. Man is not reduced by it to a merely passive instrument of the Supreme will, but exalted to the position of a mighty and responsible agent—the recipient of God's grace and the organ of His power—while the measure of his gifts, and the degrees of his influence on the mind, are the behests of a profoundly wise Sovereignty. Vast inequality undoubtedly marks His dispensations, whether to persons or communities; yet perfectly consistent with justice, which reaps only where it has sown, and gathers only where it has strewed.

Between the highest and most constraining visitations consistent with an intact moral agency, and the lowest point to which they may range, either as an original gratuity, or from judicial dereliction on account of sin,

there is doubtless a wide interval; yet over this one moral territory, a holy, but merciful sceptre is absolute; and though a revealed system of means be its appropriate counterpart, and man be advanced in the sphere of his agency to the sublime condition of a worker "together with God," his insufficiency to operate *alone*, is the chief lesson inculcated by Revelation; and which providential analogies confirm, though thoroughly antagonist to the most cherished propensities of his heart. "Neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." He alone that ordains means, can effectually employ them. He must wield his own instruments, or they fail, because disjoined from his own agency. Man may arrange and employ his own talents, or those of others, but his bounds are fixed—"he cannot pass over." God's province of action cannot be invaded, nor results secured by creature counsel and industry which would deprive Him of His glory. The care for, and maintenance of His own work, —peculiarly His,—is His concern emphatically; and His agency is as much declared by its preservation and spread, as it is in the works that surround us. Nor is man's province of agency so much a positive as a negative one. It is not so much to call into action the divine power, as to remove obstacles to its manifestation—to bring himself or his fellows under the necessary conditions for the realization of its causal efficacy. Thus was the preparatory mission of the great Forerunner set forth under the image of mountains removed, and valleys exalted, in order that the glory of the Lord might be revealed, and all flesh see it together; and this holds equally true of the state of a single human heart, or the collective opposition of a world; the conditions equally demand His agency with the work itself; nor beyond the appliances which man puts forth upon his fellow, is there more than one reserve of strength which he holds by special privilege—one by which he constrains Omnipotence to his aid. PRAYER contains the practical philosophy of the Bible

—the key of heaven—the charter of benediction,—and the league of man with God.

Christianity is to be regarded as the grand development of the doctrine of POWER. Prophetically, was the Christ announced as the "Arm of the Lord," and evangelically demonstrated as such, by the opened mystery of his person and work. In the whole history of his earthly manifestation, the one idea of power is prevalently displayed, but chiefly in the Atonement he offered for our sins, and his consequent bestowment of the gift of the Holy Spirit. These acts, however diverse in character, and implying opposite conditions of the same being, were economically and morally one. They were demonstrations of Omnipotency, as being the very principle and substance of our redemption. Its whole causation lay in these acts of Christ alone. Here was "the power of God unto salvation," which the gospel published,—that "power from on high" which alone gives the general boon a distinct personal appropriation, maintaining a counter reign to that of evil in individual minds, and investing with the church collectively, as its prepared receptacle, the agency of universal regeneration. It is not in the *kind*, but the *degree*, of the power wielded, that Christianity excels every antecedent economy of grace. As it is perfect truth, so is it perfect power. The glories of Pentecost are the heritage of all ages, and "the day of salvation" contains every instrumental and effectuating agency, necessary to the full accomplishment of the designs of Almighty love. In this sense, as well as in the order of events, it is "the last time," comprising the past and the future in its plenary, glorious NOW. As the keystone, which binds either segment of the arch together in beauty and strength, so does it perfect the span which redeeming wisdom has ordained for Adam's whole race. It is "the dispensation of the fulness of times"—the sun in its meridian height—the ocean in its unfathomable depth, and shoreless amplitude. It is God's own zeal burning in the breasts of his servants, as the

altar's coals laid upon the Prophet's lips. It is Christ's chariot let down from the firmament of the third heaven, all refulgent with his sacrificial glory, with wheels, eyes, and living ones—all the creatures of His love, and the ministers of His Spirit, whose instrument the truth itself is—the law of his most wonderful operations—at once the harbinger, the ideal, and the pledge of the world's restoration.

In the very theory of Christianity, as well as in its history, the whole work of God is the creature of his Spirit, to which the earthly and personal work of Christ was evidently subservient. His was the grand intermedial action between the purpose of the Father, and the consummation of the Holy Ghost, connecting the hypostatic distinctions of the Three-One, with a corresponding order of developed counsel. Conformably with this rationale, the remote causes of our redemption are hidden in the abyss of a Paternal and Filial correlation, and they become manifest in operation by the office of the Holy Ghost. Thus the relations of each Person to the world are fully declared, and a corresponding fulness of blessing is the result.

The gift of the Spirit is a dispensational perfection, not a temporary, or merely sovereign adjunct to it. It is as truly a fact in the history of our redemption, and the celestial polity founded on it, as is the finished work of Christ on earth. He is as fully given and sent forth by Christ from the Father, as He ever will be while the world lasts. He cannot have objects to accomplish ulterior to the kingdom of the Son, nor doctrines to teach, nor agencies to create, not included in the existing system of divine truth. This bounds his whole office. It is simply administrative of a polity actually in being, and definitely made known, not of an unrevealed supplemental something, extending through a future epoch. Existing Christianity is the last and highest dispensation of restoring grace; it is not like the law, "the shadow of good things to come," an eye descrying the glories of the future—a voice demanding preparation for something

yet to come—a teacher to whom its lessons are but initiative, the mere rudiment of a more sublime philosophy. It regards ETERNITY as its immediate, subsequent, and loftier dispensational status, claiming all intermediate scenes and evolutions as portions of itself, and the final glories of restitution, as but the fulfilment of its own promises.

Again, the importance of it as estimated by the Divine Mind, marks its corresponding interest to His people. God's regards towards it, are properly the standard of theirs: their judgment, sympathies, and exertions on its behalf are but the reciprocations of His infinite intelligence and love. To the world at large, this work bears a lasting aspect of supreme beneficence, and manifold wisdom. It is God's mind turned toward it in unchangeable grace. His eternal purpose, comprehensive of every deed of creation, and providential government, perpetually unfolding itself, yet by methods which none can confidently anticipate, and none fully comprehend. The contingencies to which it is subject, the reverses which chequer its history, its feebleness, and seemingly decaying condition in particular ages and nations, its very partial spread through so long a period of time, and the prospects which even now open into the immediate future, are all lessons to *faith*,—not satisfactions to *reason*. Its past career has not, as might have been anticipated, been one of triumphant amelioration, and of accumulating influence, each succeeding age inheriting a greater blessing than its forerunner, and bequeathing its own augmented treasures of truth and goodness to the generation following it, till the whole earth should have become more than "of one speech and language," as before its Babel days, even of ONE RELIGION—the bond of its brotherhood, and of universal concord,—the divine guardian of all human rights and interests: Wisdom,—holding all precious gifts in her hands,—herself more precious than they all,—angel of earth, and tree of life in heaven. That its supremacy is the universal Good, Providence and Revelation concurrently testify.

The whole case of the world, past and present, may be viewed as one vast experimental exhibition of the impotency of man to realize his own ideal of human perfectibility,—to do more than to extend his capacity, without increasing his virtue, and to embellish his nature, without satisfying its cravings after happiness,—in a word, to work out, by his own appliances, however continuous, the noble end of his being's full weal; and, also, the utter desperateness and folly of his efforts in carrying on the project, while pertinaciously overlooking, and even scorning, the proffered help of God himself. The failure and the curse have spoken in vain to besotted worldly wisdom, in all ages. It is not of a millenniary of science, a paradise of civilization, that the Spirit of God has so long testified. Its visions are not of the creations of human wisdom, of man *self*-elevated and *self*-blessed,—of his world without a woe, or his eye without a tear. It is no COSMOPOLITAN glory which dazzles us as we look upon the last pages of truth,—a SACRED city is beheld, not raised out of the earth, but descended from heaven; not bright, with the full sun's strength, of all science, arts, and politic perfections commingled, but with the glory of God, and the light of the Lamb. It is the city of God, not of the World: He is its builder and maker, not Man. It is the grand image of manhood celestialized; of earth and heaven blended together; of intellect irradiated by its parent sun; and of life laving in its own Eternal Fountain.

The existing religion of our day is precious, not only to the living mass, but to the coming generation. It is our light to bless their waking life—the doctrine which embalms the dead with immortality, adding life to life, and blessing to blessing. To our posterity, it is as Jacob's excellency over Esau's portion. It is more than earthly fame, or than mines of wealth. It imparts to families, in their successive being, the indissoluble unity of the Church itself,—gathering them together "in one." Heaven is aggrandized by the succession of a sainted ancestry, and

earth blessed by scions of beauty and fruitfulness, shown and lent to it, till their virtues are fully ripened, and the predestined hour of recompense shall have come.

CHAPTER III.

EVANGELISM.

To nations, religion is the only lasting basis of unity and repose, combining perfect order with the highest freedom—the pillars of the state with the throne of God. It individualizes good, by making every one more capable of receiving and transmitting it. The application of its principles to social improvement is indefinite, and insures a perpetually augmenting divine blessing. Thus there is, in the body politic as well as in the Church, an "effectual working in the measure of every part." A system coming from God must be a copy of His own character, and an instrument of His benignity, conveying the greatest possible amount of good; while it rescues us from the perils of expediency, and the mischievous sophistry, which separates utility from virtue, and happiness from religion. But a most impressive light in which to view it is, the lofty PROBATION to which it subjects nations possessing it, and the good and evil which it judicially makes to alternate in them.

The legislative, judicial, and state action of such nations is to be measured by its recorded principles. All negative, but especially all express, contraventions of its statutes, are offences against those "eyes of fire" which, with searching jealousy, pervade the soul of nations, as of individuals—condemning "spiritual wickedness in high places." The "judgment" so frequently adverted to in prophetic Scripture as exercised by God over nations, is nothing else than a perfectly administered Christianity. It is the full sove-

reignty of Christ, set up by means of his Church and the power of his Spirit, so moulding the heart of nations, and controlling their sentiments and acts, on all questions of public obligation and interest, as to make all their corporate and political ordinances expressions of His ascendency, and of public homage offered to His throne. If these characters of legislation and political action be not impressed upon a nation holding the Christian faith,—such fact is, indeed, in proof of its unsubstantiation in the public mind—but cannot be pleaded against the doctrine of obligation, involved in the very presence of the divine rule which it has accepted and confessed in the worship set up within its territory—by the religious sanction which it casts about the title and investiture of the Supreme Magistrate, and interwoven with the constitution, and functionary departments, of the state. "Whose is this image and superscription?" asked our Lord, when pressed to decide the litigated question of the tribute payment. The rejoinder to the reply, "Cæsar's," is comprehensive of more questions than of that immediately settled by it, "render therefore unto Cæsar."

Religious recognitions are the basis of religious obligations; but these, however just, cannot be practically maintained by an artificial system of public ordinances, as distinguished from a substantial embodiment of the national mind—the actual religious life which breathes and moves within the frame of the polity. Such a system becomes a mere corpse, subject to the invariable laws of corruption; or it resembles an olden effigy, corroded by time, or mutilated by violence. Public sympathy with it being lost, its image is seen in the forms of clouds which hasten to depart, or the party-coloured bow, which, however beautiful and perfect, is soon resolved into nothing by the elements that gave it birth. The Work of God in a nation is the true measure and safeguard of public religion. It is, according to our Lord's expressive parable, the only power that can leaven the mass, and truly create a Christian nation. Its

progress is from individuals to families, and from families to communities and nations. Its features and sympathies are essentially popular,—it marches on to empire by individual conquest,—and its last and greatest triumph is to plant its banner on the throne, and to display the insignia of its sovereignty in the assembly of "the gods."

The amount of living Evangelism, embodied in the mind of England, and variously distributed in its existing forms of Christian profession, is a solemn trust, committed to the nation, proportioned to the grace of its bestowment, and the excellencies of its blessings. To a large extent, it has redeemed it from the pernicious extremes of infidelity and superstition; whose joint usurpations, or separate ascendency, would, in its absence, have probably been perfected, and have ripened the vintage, to be trodden in "the winepress of the fierce wrath of God Almighty;" or else, have consigned us to the sceptre of an arctic formalism, to terminate only in the ruinous alterative of a social disruption.

The rapid increase of population and wealth, which of late years have set in upon the empire; the almost preternatural activity of its mind; its wide commingling with the mind of central Europe; the long and broad peace which has cast the most polished and potent nations of modern times into each other's arms, as those of a long-forgotten brotherhood,—have given an expansion, wide and mutual, to collective mind. It has created new elements of social power, both of good and evil. It has bestowed the leisure requisite for searching introspection, and more general, as well as critical comparison. The sympathies of nature have, by compact, gradually warmed, and become more intense, producing mutual assimilation. In addition to the native currents and eddies, created by the flowings of a strong and prosperous empire, it has brought in the tidal waters of surrounding countries; thus introducing a strong double action upon our social state. Manners, morals, literature, philosophy, religion, have all been silently, but

powerfully, influenced by these home and foreign causes. Great changes have taken place in every department of our national being, and seem to augur and prepare for others: and these again may involve the ultimate re-casting of all our institutions, whether political or religious.

It is a token of good for the future, though portentous and unknown, as it has been a felicity in the past, that hitherto the work of God has been revived and extended in our land. Its distinct and vital dawn may be dated at little more than a century back, when the breath and pulse of a once giant race had well-nigh ceased in the frames of their dwindled posterity,—and when, over the statues of genius, the triumphal arches of warriors, the palaces of princes, the seats of learning, and the brow of a whole nation, renowned for its martial, political, and commercial eminency, there gathered "darkness and the shadow of death," which deepened with advancing hours, till torpor invaded its every limb, and the whole body became well nigh defunct.

The nation's Protestantism was shrivelled almost to impalpability. She had retreated to unhomely fanes and cloisters, as if to die there; or appeared only as a state symbol—a minion of courts—or a wreath to garnish royal heads on holidays. She could not challenge personal homage by her heavenly majesty, as formerly, but rested on prescription, the poor hollow bottom of every idol in the world. She pointed not to her living family with delight, but to the time-worn tombstones of her first-born: or pored over the historic page—that book of noblest heraldry which registered their deeds immortal. Though gorgeously apparelled, and richly endowed, gray hairs and decrepitude were accelerated, not prevented, by her courtly pampering. Her tongue, once powerful as the flame which lighted on the heads of the apostolic college to melt the spirit of a nation, could only whisper creeds and confessions to scanty, heedless congregations. Her eye, once bright and vital as

the morning, was purblind and soulless, as enstranged from gospel vision, and long-fixed diversion from the cross. Her countenance had lost its beauty and inspiration—its true talismanic power over painted, meretricious Error, with her mystery-labelled forehead, and cup of sorceries.

Protestantism yielded not to fierce assault, or expired, as in her last retreat, pierced by the phalanxes of confederate foes; the causes of her threatened downfall lay within her own bosom:—unfaithfulness to truth, worldly repletion, engendering a false sense of security, indifference to duty, disregard of responsibility, and practical infidelity: in these evils she had laid a snare for her own feet, and gathered the magazine for a speedy ruin. Had this season of deep and ominous declension been accompanied with the various and intense antagonisms of a later century, the issue does not seem doubtful; but the winds, as in the Apocalyptic vision, were holden during that season, which, had they swept over tracts of fading life and autumnal foliage, would have carried every vestige of them away. They were reserved till another spring had renewed its youth, and opposed to them a new creation of vital vigour, which, however labouring beneath their blast, waved and bowed itself without being broken, and smiled triumphantly in the returning sunbeam, when the tempest had sunk to rest.

There is a doctrine, as glorious to faith as true to fact, in the prophetic saying, "When the enemy cometh in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." It speaks to the Church two great lessons:—the season when divine interposition may be expected, and in what the interposition itself consists. It would seem as if, on God's part, His resources were in abeyance, till the turning point between life and death was reached, or the triumph of the foe was sure; and that it is in the revival of evangelical religion, as the work of God, that Church deliverance is found. This is God's standard—this is God's

sign. A second Scripture, found in the same prophet, is expressive of the same cheering truth: "A bruised reed shall he not break," &c. The Church, though prostrate as the reed lying on the earth, but not broken from its root,—or seeming so reduced in splendour and vital flame as the flax in the lamp-wick, when so exhausted that its light has become all but extinct, is nevertheless not suffered to go out—He lifts it up again, as the reed from the earth, with his fostering hand; he replenishes the lamp with a living power, and makes it more brilliant than before. He either revives the old Church, or he creates a new one to fill its place. If he remove one candlestick, he lights and lifts up others. The doctrine is, that God never suffers his cause in the earth to be wholly lost; that some signs of life shall exist, somewhere and somehow; and that such signs, though feeble and despicable, are sure prognostics of mighty showings of his power: "He will send forth judgment unto victory."

Thus it happened in the introduction of Christianity itself into the world, and in every subsequent revival of it. True religion has, in every instance, been in a low and expiring condition. Unfaithfulness in its professed disciples and appointed guardians, has rendered its preservation and future ascendency an impossibility, but to God himself. And such was the complexion of the case at the period referred to. Little more than a nominal Protestantism remained, wearing the equivocal aspects of our forefathers' folly, or their children's degeneracy; but still inestimable, as not having removed the "old landmarks" of separation from Rome, and holding forth that grand beacon light,—the Word of God, together with the maintenance of pure forms of Christian worship, though too generally disjoined from the power of godliness. Such a state of things, however faulty, greatly favoured the outset of a spiritual movement, which, thoroughly severed from every political creed, and tinge of partizanship,—from all boisterous declamation re-

specting ecclesiastical corruptions,—proposals for merely external reforms, or theoretic visions,—aimed simply at supplying the grand desideratum of the land, and of the age—the revival of the primitive *spirit* of religion. It came not in the startling form of an innovation—of "some new thing," to which "history could bear no testimony, and the country no traces, in its sacred biography, or theologic lore." Like Christianity itself, it was founded in some prior form of spiritual existence; its credentials were found in its irrefragable appeals to the "faith of God's elect." It was no cometic phenomenon—an unrelated form of religious life—a bubble rising from the social flood—a unit in the fantastic family of enthusiasm: it was PROTESTANTISM, not so much in its negative as in its positive character,—not so much in what it excludes, as in what it contains within its narrowed ring, namely, the whole mystery of the faith; as the pillars and sockets of the ancient tabernacle enclosed its precious symbols within "the holiest of all." It had an ancestry, as well as a posterity; a past, as well as a present being. It was the re-issuing of a lost spring; a hidden treasure exposed; a patrimony recovered; a winter state of vegetation succeeded by a spring of bud, and bloom, and fragrance, and fruit. It was the barren one beginning to bear, whose cries carried terror through the land, and whose first-born, though sons of light, were "as wonders unto many."

The purely *spiritual* character of this revival was its glory. It was an unmixed offspring of the Truth, and, in this respect, stood forth as more apostolic than the Reformation itself. It partook largely of the simplicity, which, to man, seems like improvidency; of that childhood, which is the test of heavenly greatness, and which, insensible to the charms of wealth, the prizes of ambition, and the politic calculations of selfishness, is absorbed by greater objects in the distance, and regards as vanities and shadows the intermediate visions, which enchant all earth-born souls.

This work began, as do the most signal acts of God, without long forethought, powerful combination, and a preconcerted system of means, by its agents; the child of to-day—the heir, not the slave, of to-morrow; regarding duty, not consequences; rising up to stem the torrent of a nation's vices; to brave its enmity, and to endure its opposition; entering almost single-handed into a contest, to which numbers, as well as gifts, might have seemed inadequate, it joined battle in the name of God alone, won victories, and gathered spoils, from a field where every other arm than that of faith would have returned bootless. As a mere element of heavenly life, its first instincts and cares were not forms of embodiment, or modes of action. These came out of its native power of development. It rather, in accordance with the doctrine of the vision of dry bones, sought to re-animate matter, once living, than to organize for itself: rather to sacrifice its individuality, than to limit its power; to be diffusive and impartial as the atmosphere, than to be circumscribed by enclosures, or to become the property of a sect. As springs, in process of time, form their own channels, and define their own courses, so has this glorious outburst of living piety found its proper line of communion with the world. After subsidizing other churches, and scattering its sacred treasures with unsparing hand—even as England's wealth and influence redounding to its neighbour nations—it still remains, under its primitive name of METHODISM, distinct in its economy, and independent in its position; true to its principles, and catholic in its spirit; a mighty reinforcement of the Protestant heart of the nation, and a general blessing to the world. Portionless and despised, as if born of fornication,—at least, endowed only with the gospel heritage of persecution; and trained to labours more abundant, for wages gathered "to life eternal,"—Methodism was the great event of the eighteenth century, and its progress and results were the commencement of a fresh era, in

the destinies of the Church, and the aspects of Christianity on the world. Equally designed to conserve and to extend the dominion of religion—to re-kindle the lamps that had gone out, and to carry the sacred fire around the world—its origin is splendidly attested by its principles and effects; and if to say, as did the Pharisees of Christ, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils," were a blasphemy against His Spirit; a portion of the blindness and infatuation, as well as guilt, of such a sin, must adhere to those who, in all ages, blaspheme His work, when presented in its New Testament summary, the "new creature, in Christ Jesus."

To what end are state settlements, and Church canons pleaded, against the plain, living testimony of the Spirit of God? Or, if a sign from heaven were demanded, which, like an oath, should be an "end of all strife," what could it speak more than do the existing oracles of truth? He who is "The Truth" having said, "by their fruits ye shall know them: do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"—before the light of this testimony all traditionary doctrines, and merely human opinions, flee as shadows. The endless genealogies, with the priestly despotism founded on them, which has nothing but pedigree and prescription to plead on its behalf, are remitted to Rome. The arrogant Phariseeism, which through all ages, and under every ecclesiastical form, retains its full identity, is divinely rebuked, as Ishmael, who mocked Isaac—the child of the flesh, who persecutes him that is "born after the Spirit." Somewhat anomalous, and consequently difficult as the position of Methodism, viewed as an ecclesiastical system, is, it is the natural result of its purely spiritual origin, with the contingencies arising out of it. Its position is not that chosen for it by its founder. He contemplated no separate embodiment of it, but a re-infusion of life into the national church,—the somewhat waning mother to be warmed and reinvigorated to youth by the breath of her own offspring.

But, this boon refused, a second personification of nonconformity ensued: not indeed identical with the first, but rather presenting points of contrast. Methodism was neither theoretically reforming in its spirit, nor divisive in the materials which it embodied. Its agent was the gospel only; its subjects, the mass of sinful and lost men. No existing churches were enfeebled or despoiled by its operations. Its ambition was not to create a sect, but to save souls. The great gospel object was adopted as its own, and pursued with a zeal and consistency which, in spite of every weapon of enmity and device of calumny, was triumphantly vindicated in the strong and wide impulse given to the religion of the age and country. It reacted on the Established Church, not by awakening any sympathy toward itself, but, from a regard to its conservation and predominancy, in the recovery of its lost popular influence. That Church, Prometheus-like, stole the fire it had vainly endeavoured to quench, and surreptitiously seized, as an element of power, what, as an ally, it had treated with scorn.

As in apostolic times, so in our own, it has happened that Christ has been preached, "of contention," yet not in vain. The influence of party motive, and the bigotry which an absorbing regard to particular interests creates, do not destroy, though they impair and adulterate, the efficiency of a substantial Evangelism. The increased breadth of instrumental application, and even competing religious agency, is a public gain; even though deteriorated by the scantiness of its charity, and the predominancy of its human infirmity. Good follows this imperfect administration of Christianity, however blended with accidental evils, as compared with the baneful effects of false systems in the ascendant, or the dark, blank domination of a worldly, atheistic spirit. Methodism, as the latest embodiment of religious feeling in England, is remarkable for its biformity of countenance, partaking of a resemblance to the older and more parental forms of religion in the country—friendly to both, but not identical with either.

Though not adopting the abstract principle of dissent, Methodism is practically one with it, by its non-recognition of any ecclesiastical superiority, and its equal claim, on simply spiritual grounds, to gather unlimitedly the unevangelized population of the country within its pale, and to spread its dominion as widely as possible, under the wing of a constitutional defence. It has done much toward consolidating religious freedom, by greatly increasing the amount of practical nonconformity,—raising the voice of public opinion in its favour whenever encroachments have been apprehended from state interference, abetted by ecclesiastical bigotry and intrigue. It has greatly modified the action of the Establishment on society in general; while it has, by its principles and example, in common with other bodies, provoked it into an attitude of almost portentous activity: it has brought it down from its olden eminency of vituperation and annoyance, to the same level of moral adventure and popular competition with itself. If the *spirit* of the Establishment has but little improved under these appliances, its influence has prodigiously increased; showing, that whatever opinions may be held on the comparative merits of the endowment and voluntary principles as fiscal questions, a *moral* voluntaryism is the very soul of a church, and that its true interests are best secured by a well-sustained effort to do its duty, and fulfil its destiny.

The present condition of religion demands the whole emphasis of the prayer, "Revive Thy work." Generally, it may be assumed, that whatever admits of progression, and of perfection as the result of this law, is subject also to their opposite, decline. This observation is borne out by universal experience, and illustrated by the whole history of human society. Progression may be affirmed, indeed, of society as a whole, during its many centuries of evolution; but with a concurrent oscillation, or pendulum motion, so disguising the fact, that the certainty of it can only be perceived by comprehensive observation, taken at remote intervals.

The social, and even intellectual law of advance, is liable to be disturbed by many invading occurrences, perhaps really necessary, or, at least to some extent, promotive of ultimate advance. Nor is religion an exception to this course of human things; as being an element cast into humanity itself, and, therefore, subject to all its characteristic changes and accidents.

It may, indeed, be affirmed, that tendencies towards declension and corruption in religion, are more certain and powerful than those which intrude into simply human institutions; as it touches our common nature at more points than anything else, and is subject to more counter-influences from the moral condition of man, as well as the contingent circumstances of society. The causes necessary to its essential purity, and aggressive vigour, though thoroughly superhuman, are yet so intimately combined with earthly agencies, and so liable to be attenuated by many, and almost imperceptible counteractions, often arising out of its successes, that they seem to be almost essentially intermittent. They are the strong inclinations of men, to a relaxed and easy measure of religious practice, and to glory in the deeds of a religious ancestry, without imitating them; or to view, with complacency, the breadth of a moral occupancy, without scrutinizing its qualities; to affect the show of externalism; to court the suffrage of the world; and to trust more in means and measures where man is most prominent, than in God's blessing on the more spiritual and difficult process of securing it. These are all predisposing principles, and characteristic symptoms of spiritual decline. They prove a diminution of the vital force which originated a movement, and which gave existence to the whole machinery of means. Abatement here, is incipient decay; the impulsive power is weakened, and, from henceforth, extension itself is an aggravation of debility, not an accession of strength; and the largest Christian communities, like the largest empires in their wane, fall, and are crushed by their own weight.

All religious revivals tend to expenditure, and cessation, by the very law of their spirituality, unless perpetually watched; their widening ripples on the social deep become more feeble, till they disappear, unless centre action be vigorously kept up, just as uniformly as the life of personal religion in the soul. The spirit of the world, and the antagonism it furnishes to religion, however modified, are essentially the same; and the nearer the opposing forces approach to an equilibrium, the more equivocal must be the position of that which desiderates conquest. Mere tactics avail little, if there be no high belligerent tone to support them. Even advantages of position, and an almost yielding mould of public feeling, fail to secure the seemingly practicable results of such a season. The charter of conquest belongs only to an *earnest* Christianity. The full pitch of its energies, the unrestrained application of its resources, are at all times equally demanded for the strife; and are, perhaps, really more taxed to accomplish its ends, in what are called favourable times of the church, than in such as, externally at least, are most sternly adverse.

The present condition and prospects of religion in our country, cannot be regarded as a matter of secondary interest to its friends, of every denomination. Its comparison with the past may be less difficult than it may be invidious, and, perhaps, discouraging. Its breadth is greater, but is its depth at all proportionate? Doctrinal polemics, and communional jealousy may be less rife, but are truth and charity more eminently enthroned? There may be more tranquillity, order, and decorum in the religion of the day, but is it marked by the same strength, simplicity, and zeal, as formerly? The external cast of churches, as of nations and individuals, may bear marks of social progress, which may consist with, and be the badge of a woful degeneracy. A well-defined and balanced church polity,—an exact routine of public duties,—an elaborate organization for instrumental action,—may conceal, but not replenish, the inanity

which renders the whole all but powerless for spiritual ends.

The temper, and the morals too, of the world, may have invaded it, and have silently eaten into its very heart. There may be detected a growing laxity of practice, and an insensibility of conscience, in the conduct of worldly business, amongst professors of religion,—an eager passion for the accumulation of wealth and display,—a disposition to pay an excessive homage to rank and station, as class distinctions, with a proportionate indifference to the higher aristocracy of holiness, as seen apart from these distinctions.

The balances of the sanctuary are not brought forth to try the things that differ, but the false balances and weights of worldly conventionalism, which are an abomination to the Lord, and a glaring contradiction to every rule and sentiment of Christian citizenship. It is the glory which is "their shame," who thus "mind earthly things." This disproportionate and idolatrous regard for the world, becomes not merely the parent of many evils, almost imperceptibly engendered by the brisk, and even exhausting, career of aspiration,—its sure and most baneful offspring is *covetousness*, which neither reverses can destroy, nor prosperity satisfy. Like a despot, who has made his way to power by the destruction of all opponents, and over the grave of freedom, it has seated itself upon the ruins of virtue, and usurped the place which belongs to God only. The ensigns of a higher power are indeed not effaced, but it holds no real sway there. A sordid lust is supreme, garnished with all the symbols of religion,—a painted, decorated abomination,—seeking to hide its turpitude from man, and to impose upon God himself. This is ANTINOMIANISM indeed; not as it implies a disregard of a particular precept, but a dispensation from them all, in the ascendancy of one monster principle of hostility, before which Christ's sceptre lies abased in the dust. Mammon lords it proudly over the Cross, absolves its subjects from all heart allegiance, at least, and banters for

cheapness in the imposts it allows. To observe temperately the customs of society,—to use the world without abusing it,—to render "to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," not only as he is the executive, but the representative of the commonwealth; so that society, as such, shall not be niggardly dealt with under the puerile, though honest plea, of an all-absorbing religionism,—is a practical wisdom, demanding not only the single eye, but the large and discriminating mind.

The true Christian character, in its relative aspects to the world, is identity with difference. It is not devoteeism on the one hand, nor worldliness on the other. It is the "moderation" which an apostle predicates of Christians, as *theirs;* and which he requires they should make known to all men. It is a spiritual temperance, a heavenly medium, avoiding extreme paths to the right and to the left. It is Scriptural rectitude in its largest sense, not as describing one virtue, but including all,—like charity, which is "the bond of perfectness." It is *wisdom* as applied to character, and to Christian habits,—the just reflex of the "hidden wisdom" spoken among "them that are perfect," and equally necessary with it to make men so, in the exhibition of the entire model of their divine religion. Indispensable as this is, at all times, it is especially so in those calmer and less eventful times of the Church, when public attention is not engrossed by bold and striking action,—the sudden rush, and mighty feats, of extraordinary characters. Then religion depends less on individual influence, or individual excellency for its progress, than when such all-commanding agency is withdrawn. Then, more quiet influences come into play; character becomes more sovereign; and individuality more important. The force of separate or combined temptation, which, in seasons of stronger feeling, is readily repelled, becomes more aggressive and injurious; the world and the Church are less divided, and coalition becomes the great pressing danger to be averted.

The inclination to indulge in speculation, beyond the bounds of clearly revealed truth,—to substitute opinions for doctrines, and to revive old heresies under new names, and plausible forms,—are indubitable signs of a far-gone apostasy; and are as redoubts, cast up in the rear of a delinquency, to preclude a return to "the way everlasting." These are pre-eminently *penal* evils—offences offered to "the Spirit of truth," and often followed by long and dreadful abandonment. But the preservation of evangelical doctrine, pure and unmutilated, may consist with vast diversity of spiritual condition in the churches holding it; and orthodoxy itself may become little more than the watchword of a party, or the pride of a sect. It may have won for itself, in better days, an extended sovereignty over the public mind, and may remain in distant isolation, as the footsteps of the ocean, on a coast which it has long forgotten. It is in the nature of all objective truths to become less impressive as they are familiar to us; and, though it is said by evangelists, that when our Lord had done some mighty work, the "people wondered;" such an emotion could not have been perpetuated by a continuity of even miracles. The same power of appeal to the heart is not resident in the same fact, or truth repeated, as when invested with the freshness of discovery, or the force of the unique. Hence the power of Evangelism, as a system of truth, must diminish in a similar ratio, and become proportionably less capable of accomplishing its end, except as it is the *instruments of the Spirit;* who, reserving to Himself the more special seasons and examples of his sovereignty, is wont to proportion his operations to the proper laws of truth, and to become less striking in his effects, as his instrument is either less powerfully handled, or less heartily received. Thus, to a considerable extent, the action of Christianity, and the probationary state of masses and individuals, are modified by the state of things termed ordinary and uniform, as distinguished from the startling impetus attendant on the first

blasts of the great gospel trumpet. The responsibility of hereditary knowledge, and more gentle visitations of influence, is enhanced; the whisper is to be obeyed, as if God had spoken in the thunder or the whirlwind. If truth be so incorporated with mans's moral being, as to have become his own very reason, the oppugnancy to it is still more unnatural, and yielding to it more consonant with the highest divinely implanted instincts of man himself. But here a declination may begin, both in ministers and people, proving the stationary eminency of gospel demand. A hereditary and educational Christianity, comprising catholic belief, religious sentiments, correct morals, and even a zealous externalism, may readily supplant the true kingdom of God. Semblances, or, at best, approaches to, and preparations for, the grand evangelical state, are accepted as its substitutes. Thus the standard being lowered, and the true doctrine of conversion practically given up, the work of disciplining men to a conventualism of any kind, becomes a less formidable task. Discipline is relaxed, older forms of fellowship, or marks of peculiarity, fall into disuse. The ministry is disposted from its teaching supremacy, as Christ's ordinance,—mutual confidence in it is impaired,—and its fruit, to a great degree, consequently disappears. A palpable extension may be noted, multifarious supplemental agencies may be set on foot, new toils laid for the prey, a broader, and more skilfully contrived net fabricated, by which to sweep and dredge the social deep; but the effort is followed by no proportionate spiritual results. The *visible* of religion is more extended, but its tone is feebler,—breadth and depth are not united,—the marks of merely human doings in religion, predominate over the proofs of God's own agency; till the Church does not differ from the world, so much from its being the province of God's more immediate and spiritually visible action, as from its being a separate sphere of religious objects and associations. It is not so much "God's husbandry," "God's building," or His creation, (the in-

spired representations given of it,) as it is the factitious combination of humanity *religionized* not *evangelized* by a baptism into the true mysticism,—the life and power of the Pentecostal age. True evangelism, in our day, has to contend with the very accidents of its own revival, or those previously found in the religious and social peculiarities of our country.

Differences of creed, and ecclesiastical organization, while they stimulate to common advantage, beget jealousies, with their brood of mischiefs. The proper effects of combination are wanting; and while power is lavished on party pretensions and interests, which ought to have been applied for the advancement of religion, the motley and ill-joined appearance which denominationalism gives to the impersonation of religion, detracts from its character, and influence over the world. Separate working is too often counter-working. The supposed utility of separate sections of Christians, is more than balanced by the evils arising out of them, and can only be vindicated on the ground that, under existing circumstances, they are necessary, and may be made to harmonize with our duty to Christ, and to one another.

The *external* causes of a depressed evangelism are many, and of formidable force. It has never approached to ascendency in the national mind. Its progress in the social scale has not been higher than the middle classes, with, perhaps, a proportionate amount of the humbler population. Few traces of it have appeared in the Senate, while it has scarcely touched at all on the circles of wealth and dignity, in the land. Its course has been exclusively popular; as water rising from the valley to the mountain's base; not as a sun looking down from its summit. In this respect, the evangelism of our age is singularly primitive in the course it has taken.

The MULTITUDES are said to have followed Christ. "To the POOR the gospel was preached,"—"the common people heard him gladly." The indignant question, "have any of

the RULERS believed on him," was doubtless founded on a characteristic fact. The PEOPLE beheld all the grand phenomena of the Redeemer's manifestation. *They* were the every-day witnesses of the glorious things, which, through all after ages, were to constrain the faith and wonder of mankind. But how little is said of their superiors, favourable either to their intelligence or piety! Herod had heard the fame of Jesus, and desired to see him; but had never used the privilege of his meanest subject; nor had Pilate concerned himself with the person, acts, or doctrine of Christ, till he appeared before him as a judge; and from his lips received sentence of death! An apostle records not a solitary fact, with its pertinent inference appended to it, but one bearing on it the sad and monitory character of an example, when he says, "which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." But the popular course of evangelical religion has never been wide and all-pervading. It has never moulded to its own temper and service the national church, which on account of its position and resources seemed to be the only adequate instrument of effecting for it a thorough nationalization. Here it has always been viewed as an alien,—almost as a heresy,—and has been met by so various and overbearing a combination of hostility, as to render its expulsion far more probable than its triumph.

Pure Evangelism is too fraternal and catholic, too equalizing, and in its details too unproscriptive a thing, to consist with the spirit of ultra-churchism, with its darling notions of hereditary privilege, and indefeasible salvation. This is in principle, though not in form, Romanism. It is essentially an unchristian system, because an unspiritual one. Its very root is carnal, and its flower and fruit bewray no celestial qualities. The spread of these principles of late, is not in evidence of a sudden apostasy in the body where they prevail, but of the accumulation of long slumbering elements, awakened into life by the breath of the times, or

the enthusiasm of a party. It rather reveals what had existed than declares what is new; and is less alarming as expressing sympathy with Rome, than as parading the obsequies of Protestantism, and the monuments that mark the dominion of the grave. This, as the index of a nascent Popery, is less pernicious than is its *negative*, teaching. It is equally a friend to infidelity, as to superstition; lowering the tone of public veneration for the characters of the Reformers, and undermining a long-cherished public confidence in their doctrine and work. Religion itself becomes suspected, as partaking of the uncertainty, and consequent unimportance of a thing afresh brought into dispute; while it furnishes to multitudes, the most convenient apology for treating it with contempt or neglect.

The history of this heresy is instructive, as showing how Providence stays the mischief of movements counter to the interests of true religion, by denying to their authors the wisdom which "discerns both time and judgment." The movement came *too late*, or *too soon* for its purpose. It did not forestall, it came in the rear of a great religious revival; and its check was furnished in the very pre-existence of the thing it was intended to destroy. Public opinion was in the advance, and repelled the dotages of Romanizing ecclesiastics with a manly Protestant firmness, decisive of the issue; and gave to popular and state interference, the honour of saving the church which its own pastorate was hastening to subvert.

What may be the reflective moral influence, and ultimate effects of recent changes in our constitution and policy, as it respects religion, it may not be easy to calculate, or to present in any very tangible and demonstrative form. One thing seems clear, that the withdrawment of that great constitutional element which our forefathers so thoroughly identified with its existence and value, is more than a theoretic blemish. It is the public abandonment of its most distinctive principle, whether considered as the bond of unity

between the legislative estates of the realm, or between the throne and the people.

The *no-religion*, which is now to be regarded as the verdict of the people, or at any rate the judgment of the state, as the necessary result of the heterogeneous composition of the body to be represented, and provided for, is an offence to the majesty of the Supreme Ruler. It looks like a compact entered into by men of different views and character, to put His claims in abeyance, or rather to disregard them altogether. The philosophical society—the political club—the mechanics' institute—and the legislature of a great empire, are, on this point, thoroughly assimilated. The Pantheist, the Idolater, the Infidel, and the Christian, are equally candidates for senatorial honours, and deliberate together on the laws by which the interests, and in many cases the *consciences*, of men professing to believe the Bible, are involved.

All this may be political expediency, or even necessity; but it is not the less a distinct, and, it may be feared, complacent avowal of a national sin; when the high ground of religion, on which our ancestors reared our polity, is abandoned for the common ground of natural rights, and when the first offices of social life, involving the highest interests of collective man, and by "Wisdom" consigned to her own tutelage, are shorn of every vestige of fealty to Heaven; and consequently, self-proscribed from the range of its blessing. Such a political degradation of religion, amounts to a public apostasy, and cannot but bring a blight on the spirit of the nation, as a judicial reaction. It is the public denial of its national supremacy to religion—an infidel infringement of prerogatives—a clipping of its rule down to a merely personal sway, or the private relationships of life. It may hold the throne of the individual man, or of the family, but not of the *state*. In the collective majesty of empire, *man himself* is made supreme. The rulers of the earth "take counsel together," saying, "let us break their bands asunder

and cast away their cords from us." It is impossible that religion, when thus repudiated, should at the same time advance in public regard, and should glow and radiate from our hearths and altars, while struggling with a vampid and foggy atmosphere, which gathers more and more upon the land, like the smoke of the bottomless pit. Its public and private action are, to a great degree, reciprocal. Nor can the vacant throne of religion be left without an occupant, in the form of some anti-christian combination. The house "swept and garnished," will be claimed by evil spirits, who "enter in and dwell there." A *vacancy* is impossible.

The precarious and fitful atmosphere of politics, like that of our insular position, will embody its own vapours in new forms; successions of party combinations arise, which, in their fierce struggles, or pliant tactics, to acquire a brief dominion, show as little patriotism, as religion; and offer up the most precious interests of the country upon the altar of expediency, or ambition. The most potent, or the most intriguing and clamorous, are first to be appeased, and, if possible, satisfied. Every demand is met by ready and abundant concession. Agitation is both the test of truth, and the vehicle of sympathy; and it becomes more rampant with success. Every fresh boon makes way for another, till the religious portion of the state, beholding with dismay their dearest interests put in jeopardy, anticipate the fortune of Ulysses and his followers—that of being finally devoured.

The same expediency which *dethrones* religion, will also *persecute* it. This Proteus can be held by no bands, as its multiformity has no limit. Legislation, stripped of its august and god-like character, sinks to the level of a trade or profession. When subject to this unprincipled domination, it keeps no conscience, though the keeper of the noblest rights of man. Its professed neutrality on the highest subject, however wrong, is a less evil than its uniform sympathy with error, and its readiness to load it with patronage, when associated with political power. Its whole art is simply

arithmetic; it is concerned with numbers, with the gross calculations of weights and measures. It is the thing of to-day, with little respect for the past, and none for the future. Its foundations are not lasting as time, and glorious as the Millennium.

In close association with this anti-christianism, we see the waning influence of the Sabbath; which, without a semblance of protection, in cases where the shield of legislation might have interposed between it and the recklessness of public companies, in their greediness for gain, has been wantonly desecrated by the tongues, as well as doings of our senators. This tone of ridicule and defiance has been caught by the ungodly multitudes of our country, and repeated in trumpet echoes through the land. The language of the senate has been construed into a full dispensation from an ordinance of God, and the only effect of mooting its better observance by its advocates from time to time, has been to leave the cause in a far more desperate condition than they found it. A legislative sanction has indeed been won,—but it is for its enemies.* Its bulwarks have been thrown down, instead of being repaired; while, if anything were wanting to perfect the desolation, beyond the instincts and habits of ungodliness so abetted, justifications of the iniquity have been elaborated, in the form of arguments, proposterous enough, as going to make Christianity a party to its own destruction.

The consequences of this anti-sabbatic conspiracy are sufficiently dreadful, in their public readings throughout the land. They have compassed, to an alarming extent, the abridgment of sacred territory, in the national mind, thinned the concourse of worshipping people, and checked the demand which otherwise would have arisen from the increase of population, and the amount of religious leaven in it, for an extended platform of ordinances. But this is not

* The recent Sunday Postal Arrangements are, in respect to this allegation, an amend to be gratefully acknowledged.

all, nor, perhaps, even the worst feature of the case. It has tended to damp the ardour and faith of the religious part of the nation; to shock, astound, and paralyze, by the parade of such an inundating wickedness, as forbade even hope in endeavouring to encounter it; while it may be feared, that in general, it has impaired the feeling of sacredness which so naturally belongs to the day, and infused the subtle poison of its sophistry, and the contagion of its example, into the bosom of the Church itself.

As it fares with morals, so it does with the peculiar observances of Christianity: they seldom flourish, where general society yields them no homage; and principle, without auxiliaries in public sympathy, is left to maintain its protest, and its warfare against national evils, alone.

The disappearance of the habit of Sabbath-keeping, in a country, is the sure token of religious decay; and is in fact the uplifting of the banner of Infidelity in the place of this great public sign of The Faith. A conscience loose from the obligation of the Sabbath,—which feels no difference between the sanctuary and the office—the sacredness of public devotions, and the companionships and recreations of the world,—is surely not in a condition to be appealed to, on the more general question of the truth and importance of religion itself. Such a question is foreclosed by the audacity of that impiety, which has wrested from its sceptre its best defined, and most visible domain; prostituting it to the service of pleasure, or of mammon.

If religion's voice cannot persuade men to cease from their labours, to forego their pleasures, and to combine in public demonstrations of their belief, with offerings of prayer, thanksgiving, and praise to the Creator and Redeemer of the world, where is its authority over conscience, its dominion over the thoughts and affections of men? Or how can religion be a principle of social combination and mastery, if the very law of its publicity be abandoned, and the fulcrum on which its public leverage rests, be destroyed?

The figures employed in Scripture to describe and enforce it, give eminency to the doctrine of its publicity. "Ye are the light of the world,—a city set on a hill, cannot be hid, &c." And what is its light, as excluding its day? the hours when its rays are concentrated, and their powers shed upon the world, as from a meridian height? Or, what its pedestal and form, except its public and chartered worship? Nor can these be lowered, or superseded in the progress of society, without the evils incident to a systematic irregularity following. The very pressure upon the integrity of religious ordinances, occasioned by the strength and rapidity of social development, cannot be yielded to, without an ensuing moral reaction, as injurious to the real interests of society, as to those of religion itself. The rest, and re-invigorating efficacy of the Sabbath, become more necessary as social organization is more elaborate, and its demands upon individuals increasingly urgent. The hurried pulse of a feverish system, gives signs of a tremendous action of the social stimulant, as exhausting as it is provocative. It damages physically, domestically, and morally. It drains to exinanition, it distracts almost to madness. The whole man is stretched upon a rack, or mechanized, as by a treadwheel. The world rises in its demands, upon men, as Pharaoh upon his slaves; till existence degenerates into the lowest vassalage to sense and circumstancess.

Philosophy and religion equally protest against this indignity. Is then the only effectual bar to this usurpation to be withdrawn? Is the chain already intolerable in the weight and number of its links, to be rivetted through both ends, after it has been coiled round its victim with crushing gripe; as the fabled serpents wound round the body of Laocoon? The great institution, which alone rescues man from the overbearing tyranny of the world, and gives to his moral being public notice of its distinction and destiny, must be maintained, as the very palladium of social, as of religious weal.

In the beginning, the whole fortune of man's race was made to hinge upon a positive precept, as a test of the moral subjection of man to God, and as the material embodiment of duty. And the positive bears its analogical importance still. It is bound up with, and subservient to, the moral of religion, in the institution of the Sabbath. It is the sign of a *covenant* relation beween God and man, distinguishing Christian nations from all others. It is the public recognition of a SAVIOUR, as well as of a CREATOR —of the honours and obligations of Redemption, in addition to those of Providence. It solemnly defines man's rights in the world; and reserving a portion of life for God's service alone, it sanctifies the residue for man's use, with a blessing derived to it from its sanction, and the tincture of its hallowing sacredness. It is a pause commanded by the relations of man to both worlds. It is the time-keeper of all engagements,—the divine arbiter of all proportions in our regards and interests—a guardian of our whole being —an intermedial paradise to earth's sojourner—a type, and an assurance of a last lot in heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGE.

"Has man then found the remedy for the ills of man?"—PASCAL.

WITH the last observation is properly connected the notice of some characteristics of the age, one of which is that of extreme motivity and rapid transition. Never was the world of man so little disposed to rest on the basis of the past, to survey its progress with satisfaction, and to conclude the series of its social transformations in an Elysium so perfect and beatific, that to it the future shall add nothing. In this respect, the condition of man presents a singular contrast with the constitution and ordinances of

his dwelling. Above and around him, Immutability holds its silent reign. Everywhere, Order proclaims Omnipotency. Law, is equally the language of the depths, and of the firmament. Day and night are braced together in bonds irrefragable. The cycles of the seasons, and the journeys of worlds through space, are all but samples of identic variety. Sameness is even perpetuated in the series of atmospheric changes, however subtle and undefined their causes.

Nothing exterior to man is subject either to deterioration or improvement. It seems as if struck off at once, and for ever, from one great archetypal idea of perfection, yielding a sublime comment on the word of Scripture, "God requireth that which is past;" that is, he reverts in the maintenance of his creation, to the grand primitive idea which gave it birth, and which is enthroned in its whole administration and issue. But man's history and present condition show every possible variety. His is, throughout, a revolutionary existence. It set in with his birth, and will impel him to his end. It seems as if man, in his mundane capacity, required an indefinite duration for his expansion; and that, frail and little as he is, individually considered, the total of his nature bears some analogy to its personal immortality, and can only approach the climax of its earthly glory by leisurely and inexplicable progressions. Its whole aspect is essentially prospective; its prognostics ever deeply bespeak the future. Its instincts are all prophetic. It looks as if restless to break away from the earlier moulds of its being, and to cast itself into others; to be struggling to free itself from restraint; and to urge onward and upwards its faculties, as the insect breaks from its egg, or its chrysalis forms, till its spangled wings glitter in the sun, and waft it through the firmament.

There is, in our humanity, an indomitable energy—a power of life—to force every barrier to its progress, and its confluence with the shoreless and unfathomable. It may

pause, but only to recommence action with Herculean vigour. Its most depressed and set conditions, are but as the grave before the resurrection; or as icebound, helpless nature before the vernal hours. Change will come. The treasures of improved civilization, learning, moral and religious expansion, are hoarded somewhere, and will find their outlets in due season. The seeds of the greatest changes are often dropped in silence, or during midnight, and the heavens water them when no eye looks on. If fire be not produced by the steel and flint brought together, an electric rod and spark may be conducted by an angel's hand, and the slumbering world starts up with horror on beholding the all-devouring flame.

But, in whatever department of life, or by whatever methods, the changes are brought about, involved in the progress of man, the Christian view of Providence is as consistent as it is consolatory. Something is left for something better. *Progress is God's ameliorative order.* It denotes the vastness as well as unity of His plans, all centred in man; and the immeasurable greatness of the resources furnished by his nature for their final accomplishment. Every event belonging to our social and moral history is pregnant with some weighty lesson, to be added to the pre-existing stores of experimental wisdom.

Every epoch of time has solved some problem, and suggested others. It has exploded reigning fallacies, prompted fresh inquiries, and opened new fields of discovery in the departments of science, or in the practical economy of life. The obstacles to man's advance, (chiefly arising from his moral condition,) have beset his path in endless number and variety. Ages have been demanded for the labours, comparatively, of a day; and the point which a pure and unfettered intelligence might have reached, as a bird by a dart of its wing, has been gained, as by the difficult steps of a traveller, through the briers and brushwood of a forest, or, as by a perilous wading through swamps and rivers. But,

though the progress has been tedious, and the action painful and complicated, the phenomena are immeasurably more interesting, and their final results magnificent.

The very physical law which dooms every man to a short and precarious earthly life, is a distinct provision for social advance; inasmuch as it secures the perpetuity of that flexibility which belongs to youth, and which could not consist with a long extension of individual life. The youth of the race is thus renewed, "like the eagle's," which, with every successive moulting and renovation of its plumage, becomes more vigorous in its pinion, its flight more adventurous, its eye more penetrating, and its evolutions more perfect. Individuals die, yet live, in their posterity, in new and nobler forms,—thus exhibiting a sort of social metempsychosis. Empires rise into glory, and perish like the gourd; but their successors embody the elements of their greatness, and the results of their dominion. Even the sword,—dreadful and bloody as an instrument of carnage,—the curse and disgrace of the race,—has been the ploughshare of civilization, and the reaping hook, both to destroy the tares of vicious domination, and to gather the harvest of literature, arts, and religion, for the more general benefit of the world. The extreme activity; the widened circle of human interests and human agency; the quickened intelligence and passion for knowledge, and superiority of every kind; the redundancy of invention and experiment; the overflowings of information; the tendencies to subvert and rebuild; the eagerness to question nature in every form, and to extort her secrets; to leave the shores timidly edged by former generations; and measuring the ocean, like Columbus, to search for new worlds in the realms of idealism and of science, thus giving to nature a new birth, and a higher glory to man:—these are the peculiarities of the age we live in; and the number and weight of the elements thus commixed, constitute a universally attractive force, by which all forsake their own centre for a common one, and enter into combination for the

production of grand results. As the effects of this increased momentum are everywhere visible, the Scripture notice of the world of man is most strikingly illustrated: "All things are full of labour."

All opening mind is saluted, by complex influences, to a degree formerly unknown; which, greatly tending to expand, are proportionably mighty to debase, or to elevate it. Self is far less individualized,—character, far less the effect of independent volition, than of association. Nature is less, artificialism greater, than it was. The man is not made so much by *himself*, as by his fellows. He is more thoroughly impacted in the mass, and blended with the social essence. The action of society upon individuals is stronger; personal influence is in the inverse ratio; while the points of contact between man and man are multiplied, the channels of influence are exactly proportionate,—but the qualities of it will truly represent society as it is; and, if corruption be in the ascendant, its tendency is to self-perpetuation, and even to absolute sway.

The obvious bearing of a social state, such as has been described, is *anti-religious*. The tastes, sympathies, and correspondences of man, thus awakened into the full tension of his powers, are pervaded with an utter worldliness. Moral ideas and impressions fade away in the intense engrossment of his nature in the scenes around him, and religion holds but a precarious sceptre amidst the eager, uproarious multitudes, who seem bent on forgetting that they have other interests or being than the present. Their conversation, reading, occupations, interests,—all convey this impression. Men's communications with other lands are now so wide and frequent, that they are no more citizens of a country, but of a world. The collective voice of nations is conveyed to a single spot. Men are no longer limited to a few points of an adjacent territory, their communionism is as wide as the world. The seas are literally become the high roads of all nations. Wealth is not now the last result

of patient tradesmanship, of moderate traffic, and regular returns: it is rather the upshot of a game soon won, but oftener lost.

In such a country as England, where, to a peculiar thrift and indomitable energy of character, is added, the constantly increasing pressure of an advancing population,—and where manufacturing and commercial enterprise has been pushed to an unparalleled extent, the ordinary laws of social life are, to a certain degree, cancelled. The vibrations of so mighty an engine as this social organization represents, are tremulous through all its parts, and its power reacts upon itself, just in proportion to the impulse it gives to the world. Its derangement, therefore, becomes a periodical necessity. The very extent of its machinery, and the massiveness of its action, tend to bring it to a stand-still, and to render its resuscitation more and more difficult; while the importance of it becomes more and more paramount. The bread of millions, becomes contingent on causes over which they have just as little control, as they hold over the winds and the weather. Plenty and want are no longer the ordinances of heaven and earth; other agencies now interpose between man and his supplies, all the more vexatious, as they seem arbitrary,—appertaining to man himself, and to the artificial condition of society. The *times* are currently referred to,—not so much what God does for man, as what man does for himself, or men for each other. By these mists, which arise from the furnaces and laboratories of modern life, the vision upward is obstructed, and men but too generally see their divinities in the forms of their fellows, and the work of their own hands, through the light of these fires. The consequence of this state of things, is a very materialized condition of the national mind. The burden of the world upon every class of men is excessive. The game of fortune is played by so many hands, in so many forms, and with such strange results, that men are thoroughly absorbed in it, and society is kept in a state of fluctuation. The rich

and the poor suddenly change places. The precipitation from the summit, and the scaling-ladder, crowded with eager aspirants, conducting them to the enchanted spot, form a spectacle to contemplation not unlike to that of an assaulted citadel. Every man is seen labouring to keep his footing on the ladder, and to rise upon it; while, in multitudes of cases, the alternative of success is irretrievable ruin. To this sore travail is England doomed. With its name illustrious, its dominion vast, its wealth unbounded, it pays the price of its own greatness in the hardest measure of the curse—the sweat of the face. It is as Hercules, toiling with every muscle on full stretch, in the service of its own glory,—a mastery of name and of influence, felt through the compass of the world. It is, indeed, a hard lesson for its people to learn, that their lot, from first to last, is the veriest struggle for life; and that millions must toil to rear more than pyramidal glories, which shall neither enclose their treasures, nor perpetuate their names. Nor is this the lot of a solitary class, however numerous. All are made to feel the whole duty of man is (if not a struggle for life) nothing more than an apprenticeship to wealth. Every trade, art, profession, is driven to the extreme point, as the only law of individual safety, not to add, of prosperity. Nor is it possible to believe that, under so tyrannical a rule as this, which overbears all classes, the authority of conscience, and the voice of religion, would be obeyed; or the ascendency of sound moral principles be maintained. Swarms of impositions are procreated by the impulses of necessity, and the hope of concealment. The plea of interest, or necessity, overrules whenever Right would bring out her cause, in so corrupt a court as this. The judge fears not God, and therefore regards not men; nor is it within the province of the wisest and best administered system of earthly jurisprudence to do more than mitigate this evil, which everywhere taints and afflicts society. It can but imperfectly repress crime, but cannot create virtue.

Where the law of heaven is itself inoperative, human legislation must be comparatively powerless. The moral *sentiments* of a community being feeble, the moral *standard* is correspondingly reduced. Mutual toleration of delinquencies is established. Men learn to offend without compunction or shame. Reckless speculations and nefarious tradesmanship, are justified by the force of circumstances, or the prevalency of bad example. The loss of honour, the sacrifice of integrity, and the ban of religion, are regarded as less evils than inferiority of caste, or the gripe of poverty. To heavy toils is superadded a still heavier load of cares, arising from personal and family prospects. The multitude of artificial wants created by progressive society, and class rivalry, is hardly met by the ingenuity and industry these means so strongly stimulate. Hope and fear, excitement and depression, alternate powerfully in the breasts of all found within this wide province of competition. The whole living energy of the man, as well as his time, is consumed in the mere material duties of existence,—rendering the Sabbath a day of idleness and dissipation,—the handmaid of the world, rather than the bulwark of religion,—a mere holiday and breathing time from secular exactions.

This most characteristic feature of our country's society, is found in combination with another—as its natural effect —*the lack of moral and meditative power.* Amidst a prodigious mental activity, the higher functions of the soul are feeble and intermittent. Men live not sufficiently within the home of their own breasts; their existence is objective and foreign. They are ever abroad, soliciting, or being solicited. Their life is a ceaseless tissue of agencies and impressions. The very highest prerogatives of man are seldom called into play; those which at once create the noblest philosophy as well as religion; without which man can neither appreciate his nature nor his individuality, —his deepest wants, nor his coming destiny. He remains a stranger to *himself*—an untutored and fortuitous thing

—borne on the tide of mundane affairs, and whirled round the little eddy of life and death. The mind demands, for its development, less noise and excitation from without. Its higher and wider sphere lies within itself. Its mysteries, not its external and superficial relationships, shroud its real glories. On these the eye of religion is fixed; she addresses not his senses, but his soul,—demanding leisure, thoughtfulness, self-inspection, individualization. Her oracles fall not on the crowd,—the scenes of bustle and dissipation,—but on man, closeted with himself, or found where her ordinances appoint—at "the posts of her doors."

This over-wrought condition of society, tends to displace religion by repletion, and to annihilate it by evacuation: on the one hand, by the engrossment of material interests, and, on the other, by enfeebling the moral man. It comprises every subject of human interest within the one idea of *utility;* the simple tendency of things to relieve the difficulties, and to facilitate the advancement of society. On this ground is popular education, and even religion, patronized by the State. On a similar ground, the physical sciences are now in the first repute; while the extension and popularization of these—flattering as it is to the general intelligence of the age—deepen the mould which gives this impress to the national mind.

The doctrine practically announced by the intellectual animus of the day is,—that the physical is of greater consequence to the man than the moral, and science than religion,—that which is progressive, than that which is fixed,—the inductive, or rationalistic, than that which is authoritative,—in short, that which is of *man himself,* than that which is *of God.* The olden idolatry, which "changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man," re-appears, not in the grosser form of an image of his flesh, but the more magnificent deification of his mind. The object of adoration is not the hero, the

statesman, the monarch, the philosopher, nor even reason itself, in the abstract, so much as the genius of invention, —the power that gives mastery to man over the surrounding world,—or, it is the image of the developed social power, —or, still further, a political apotheosis, before which, as before the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar, "all people and languages" bow down.

These bearings of the times are again described in the Literature which obtains chief currency and esteem. A reading age (such as this is, to an extraordinary extent) may discern, in the issues of the press, its own image reflected. The supply of intellectual food is prepared with knowledge of the prevailing tastes of society—not with a view to create, or to rectify, so much as to indulge them as they are.

Apart from historical productions, or those on general science, (in which the age is rich,) few seem to be written with any special or great design,—to teach anything importantly new to the world,—to propound, illustrate, or apply any great original principles in the nobler branches of human acquirement. They are often but the specious retails or ornaments of the massive merchandise of other lands, or other times, put forth in the more approved forms of popular vend. Every element is diluted, every substance attenuated. Literature has become too much a trade, and has contracted the basenes of its spirit, as it has been subject to all the vicissitudes of the market. Its fashions have been as fitful as its texture has been flimsy. Production and competition have gone on proportionably increasing; still struggling for new vents, and seeking either sordid gains or ephemeral fame. Not only has every grade of mind, and of class, been pervaded with solicitation; but every vice and impiety sought out as patrons of this venal abomination; till the press, that noblest organ of modern society—comparable to the heart in its relation to the body—has been perverted, to elaborate and diffuse poison

to the very extremities of the mass, rather than the vital issues of truth and holiness. From how large a portion of the literature of the age is religion altogether shut out, as an alien, or unimportant thing,—a convicted imposture,—or an enemy laid under public proscription! Its authority is not appealed to, to decide controversies; nor its light brought out from its great etherial fount, to guide in research, or to rid from perplexity. It is superciliously ignored. Men impudently reason, or dogmatize, as if God himself had never spoken, and they were left free to speculate, to examine and settle, the first questions of existence, without any antecedent decisions, whether human or divine. The inventive and progressive characters of the age have beguiled men into a persuasion of human self-sufficiency,—that the past is to be abandoned for the future,—that nothing—*no, not religion itself*—is to be regarded as absolutely fixed, but rather, as an element in social development—something having a mere subjective existence in the human mind, and, consequently, as liable to be modified as the nature of man himself.

Thus religion is reduced to a mere division of human science,—a kind of poetic sentiment, or philosophic mysticism. It is no longer the *sole divinity* of science, simply because it is divine. It is no longer viewed as the heaven which is higher than the earth. Its *supremacy* is lost, whenever its *origin* is obscured. A subtle spirit of scepticism, the more baneful, as it is free from every taint of coarseness and blasphemy, is rife, where this species of intellectualism prevails. It is not by vulgar wit, malignant leer, or fierce attack, that Christianity is put down; but by gentle innuendo, or by bold and striking, though not avowed, anti-propositions,—or, by the affectation of a profounder science. She is silently supplanted by the offer of something transcendental, the creation of soaring contemplation, the biform product of poetic and philosophic genius together; a repast for the intellect and the taste,—

for the imaginative and the susceptible in mind,—bringing with it a deadly opiate for the conscience—Lethean draughts —oblivionizing all the higher characters and prospects of a moral being.

When, however, we refer to unbelief in any of its multiform modes, whether simply negative, or virulently opponent to the truth; we are not startled by the appearance of an adversary altogether strange and unexpected. It is as old as that which it impugns and denies; synchronic with the career of divine truth; and itself the seed and substance of that evil for which Revelation is the only antidote.

Every form of unbelief, as ascertained by history, or observation on existing facts, is one of the progeny of the great proto-pseudos, from which the world dates its misery and ruin. Its lineage is unbroken, and its affiliation perfect as the type of the first offence. Its genius is the very shadow of the Evil One, and the breath of "that old serpent," who has victimized our race. The features, too, of that first birth of falsehood, are endlessly replicated in the artifices and assurances by which it seduces and destroys. "Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Faith is represented as a bondage to fiction, unbelief as the liberty of a man. Faith is imbecility—its opposite, reason. The temper which marks the career of unbelief, and the versatile obstinacy with which it maintains its war against the Bible, mark the evil inherent in it, as the virus of the first and parent lie. It is not the controversy of one age, or people. It is not confined to men of a particular class, profession, or bias. It has not spent itself, as other contests,—whether political, social, or philosophic,—never to be revived into active force, doomed to slumber with the dead, or exist in the historic record alone. It is no figment of opinion, or accident of interest, prejudice, or passion. It is peculiar to no season of commotion, and rapid change

in the currents of society,—but is the genuine offspring of our *moral nature*, and exhibiting a strange anomaly with its general characteristics of exorbitant credulity. That unbelief is not the verdict of reason, is evident, alike from its tactics and spirit, as well as origin. For what is the object of its incessant belligerency? What are the principles which it adopts in the contest? and what the ends proposed to be accomplished by its victories? What is its object of assault, but that very thing which, if real, were man's greatest boon, and God's chiefest gift,—so that, à priori, to assume it as truth, rather than an imposture, should be the bias of reason and of the heart. The appalling fact that men fabricate, cling to, and rest in error, may itself instruct us how precious a treasure truth is; and that the supernatural, as the basis of religion, which is the doctrine of human nature, historically considered, rather implies its truth, than any fallacy in the principle itself. To be compelled to disbelieve any recorded interpositions of God, for the benefit of such a world as ours, were a last and saddening alternative to reason and philanthropy. Life and destiny should be held too dear, to permit men willingly to abandon any auxiliary, or guide, to good—how much more to contemn, even but a slenderly authenticated Revelation from Heaven! Supposing the progress of the human mind, in intelligence, to tend toward an era of final imancipation from its past and present disabilities, and to insure a grand millennium of philosophic light and freedom; does such a romantic idea preclude the utility, or necessity of Divine revelation? May not the theoretically possible to man, be made immediately and universally practicable, by the shorter method of an intervention of Almighty grace? May not difficulties be removed, great questions be determined, and the province of speculative, as well as practical truth, be greatly enlarged by such a gift;—which, divulging the secrets into which reason could not pry, and interpreting the sympathies of our nature by a vivid presentation of

their related objects,—sets us at once in the path of endless acquisition, instead of permitting us to waste our time in aspirations after the Unknown, and to live and die enveloped in the mists of ignorance, or conjecture?

But if, in addition to such reasons of appreciation, the one great fact be looked upon, that the rule of day and night, through the long track of past ages, has been strictly defined by the presence or absence of this Divine provision, that truth is thus shown to be traditive,—*brought to man*, not arisen out of him,—that reason never anointed her own eyes that she might see, or lighted her own taper to clear her path, or gave elasticity or force to her own opinion, that she might pierce the heavens, fetch oracles from that high pavilion, and speak them over the world; and if, further, fact testifies, that intellectual perversity and moral iniquity, are each other's counterpart,—alien, treacherous, loving and making a lie:—instead of showing the purity and brightness of the beam, which, wherever darted on the world's surface, and straying over creation, never fades, and is never severed from its heavenly fount: and if, too, the Book of Heaven be no inventory of common places, either in morals, worship, or theology, but the record of a DISPENSATION suited to *our* world, not to all beings; the declaration of a fact of which our whole experience is the proof,—and of a remedial counterpart: in fine, *such a class of special facts and doctrines* as no reason could have reached, and no progress have ever overtaken, much less left behind; and these tested by men for centuries,—imperfectly and but incipiently it is true,—yet so as to entitle them to rank among our experiences, immensely ameliorative, and germinant of future glories:—then cannot oppugnancy be the office of *reason* as it is truth-loving and beneficent, but faction, folly, ignominy,—and all attempts to garnish it with genius, with learning, and to commend it as either duty or interest, are but the skill of the poet's devil,—to make "the worse the better reason,"—or, rather,

of the Bible Satan, loving to transform himself into an angel of light.

Reason, in its legitimate exercise, is concerned in the discovery, estimate, and application of truth. Its office is not only to discover, but to discriminate and classify. It considers not truth under one aspect merely, or as of one kind; nor can it seek to elicit it, therefore, by one method, or test it by one canon. Belief and demonstration are certainly not convertible terms; but is this a disparagement to propositions confessedly revealed? If so, of what worth is the doctrine of probabilities to us, viewed as a practical principle? and to what a diminution of the number and force of our motives must we submit, if the empiricism of the sceptic be our rule? Certainty may well consist with degrees of evidence, corresponding with variously gifted minds. Nor is it an inconvenient hypothesis, which, assuming the fact of revelation, assumes also, that the appreciation of its evidences, should be a chief feature in our moral trial. On the supposition which scepticism adopts, this is excluded from faith; for faith itself is confounded with science. But this is manifestly wrong, where the devotion of our *whole nature* to a principle is required, not the bare assent of the intellect. MORAL JUDGMENTS are included in faith,—more thoroughly testing the dispositions of the heart, than the strength of the understanding. They more specifically refer to the will of a responsible being, than to the faculty of a contemplatist, dead to all his relations to a judicial administration. Even if candour could admit a doubt respecting Revelation, it would surely give it the benefit of that doubt; to act on preponderating evidence, being, in general, a dictate of wisdom,—the opposite in this case, must surely be stark folly. But were this a question of reason only, the friends of Revelation would not decline the challenge to settle it by her arbitration. The field is their own; their chieftains are the first names on the record of fame, and their resources, though taxed

more severely than it is likely they can be, are inexhaustible.

It is not from intellectual strength, and well-put objection, that the cause of revealed truth shrinks. It rather seeks them. But its difficulty is with those who deal in quirks and cavils,—with the manufacturers of sophisms,—the smart and dexterous conjurors, who call up intellectual phantoms at pleasure; and who resemble the dragon of Hercules, presenting a new head, as often as one was struck off.

The great Latin poet, in his immortal epic, represents Æneas, in his path to the shades, as wielding his steel with heroic force, against groups of foes, too etherial to be wounded. So, oftentimes, it fares with the sword of the Spirit. That which it encounters is so purely a negative, that its extinction cannot even be predicated. The defenders of the faith, doomed to this monotonous toil, (were it anything but sacred,) might well complain, when seeing themselves represented by Ixion, ever turning his wheel, or Sisyphus, forever rolling his stone.

The professsion, not unfrequent with sceptical writers, of a strictly philosophic impartiality, as the prevailing tone of their inquiries, is not more preposterously falsified in the specimens of this temper they exhibit, than the profession itself is absurd. The nature of religious inquiry, forbids the possibility of such an assumption, as may fairly consist either in physical investigation, or with the more abstract inquiries of a metaphysical and transcendental sort. Religion altogether repudiates this fiction. It is talismanic over the whole man, and will search and detect his most latent propensities, for or against itself. On him, consciously or unconsciously, as a test of his moral nature it must be operative; and yield an analysis of his principles, often humiliating, always complete. This position may be trusted, and applied to the solution of a multitude of phenomena, found in the history of religious investigations; and its proofs may be gathered from a large field of sceptical

literature, especially such as affects a critical and rationalistic character.

There is a congruity between individual qualifications and the objects of study, as applicable to religion as to any thing else. There is a certain cognate, or acquired euphony of soul, called taste, which is requisite to a truthful judgment, on various classes of artistic or mental products. The works of the poet's, the sculptor's, or the painter's genius, for example, are abortions to the rude and stolid portions of mankind. The nature awakened by them into fascination, must have been touched by a kindred force. The soul betrays its affinities with them, by the fire which they enkindle, and the unison they inspire.

Education is but an attempt to expand nature, to a full correspondence with the field of its relations and interests; —to draw it out into breadth, refinement, sympathy; for where these are wanting, it remains isolated, barren, dead, —if not antipathic. Let this remark be applied to the qualifications proper to sacred studies, and it will at once appear, how incongruous the mental habits of a philosopher, mathematician, or dialectician, *as such*, are to a full and fair dealing with the question of Revelation. Anatomy and psychology hold more affinity with each other, than the whole cycle of human science does to the purely supernatural and divine. From these sources alone, therefore, affinities to the Sacred, and qualifications for its research, can never spring. Even a *negative* impiety may be a fatal barrier to converse with truth; while the antipathies of nature, adventitiously supplemented, may entail a total privation of the *moral* cue indispensable to success. A deep reverence for religion, coupled with a docility of mind, against which the pride of nature wars,—a solemn sense of responsibility, which excludes trifling and insincerity,— which strongly seizes the idea that the question of Revelation, or no Revelation, is a vital one to all,—and to be settled by the force of *combined* evidences, rather than that of a

solitary testimony, and by a regard to the consequences of the *negative*, as well as to those of the *positive*,—these implied, if not formal axioms, must inform the mind of every student of divine truth.

There are mental states, not peculiar to a profession, or any classes of men, totally repugnant to the native aspects of truth,—not less so than those, which overcharged with the ideas of human venality and worthlessness,—deny that integrity is more than an idea,—or, virtue of any kind, a human concrete. The profession of it encounters a leer, and its advocacy is identified with hypocrisy. An affected pity is expressed for the credulity of mankind, and the *sham* which everywhere holds sway. In this temper, there is, perhaps, an equal mixture of vanity and callousness,—of the disingenuousness, and the egotistical. The sarcasm, the scoff, the jest, the flippant, subtle, bitter, perversion of all fact,—and by honesty, readily accepted verity, —are missiles flung over society with deadly force. Truth is, indeed, unhurt; but its weaker disciples may be wounded, or slain,—its conquests wrested from it, and its triumphs abridged. Truth, considered as revealed, may have its own criteria, (though still in harmony with human modes of notification,) which may be overlooked, or spurned, if the *love* of the heavenly doctrine be wanting. Between the initiated and the uninitiated, even the mysteries of Paganism are discriminated. The old formula of reprobation—"procul este profani"—being as appropriate an address of inspiration to the godless host of scrutinizers, as it was to the lips of the ancient hierophant. Faith, is first tentative, then remunerative. Its revelations are progressive,—its evidences accumulative. It unfolds its mysteries according to a law of disciplinary regime. Its end is not *knowledge* simply, but virtue, goodness, holiness; and, therefore, its visions brighten as its domain widens; and the transfer of the soul's allegiance to its sceptre, becomes undivided and engrossing.

CHAPTER V.

UNBELIEF.

"God only can speak appropriately of God."—PASCAL.

THE leading fallacies in all sceptic theories are glaring. The first is an unwary, if not a wilful, assumption of SELF-SUFFICIENCY to dogmatize on points of religion, without any reference to the *source* from which this power is derived. Christianity is said to be as old as the creation—to contain eternal truths—to reflect our intuitions—and to give expression to our moral instincts and cravings,—in a word, to be, apart from a certain antique and grotesque vestment of the miraculous, a purely human thing. To co-naturalize Revelation with man, and thus to treat it with a freedom to which all human things are liable, is the necessary result of a usurpation, which has its type and condemnation in the character of a parricide; or, in one, who, forgetting the entail of advantages conferred by a former age, or by a superior race, ascribes his social position, in its remove from savageism, to the force of his own genius. For is it not obvious to inquire, whence this superior light has sprung? And, how questions which the giant powers of antiquity could moot, but never master, are now regarded as the veriest intuitions? Or, how it has come to pass, that this sublime science is never found but in the wake, and under the pupilage of the Bible? This, at least, looks like a fallacy,—a self-deception,—and one, too, insuring a progeny of vitiated reasonings and corollaries.

Men, in the familiarity of perfect readership, naturally lose sight of the days of their alphabet; and when accomplished in science, of the rudimental steps beyond which they are now so far transported. The eye, long used to the sight of rising and setting suns, retains no consciousness

of the first greetings of the light. To adopt, and to substantiate, all external and objective things, is the grand property of our nature; less concerned what these things are, in the abstract, or the modes of their correspondence with themselves, than with their impressions and results. The objective, thus incorporated with our entire constitution, becomes identified with our consciousness, and with the exercises of our faculties, just as if innate. This, however, is rather in proof of the affinity which belongs to all Truth, and to the nature formed expressly to be its recipient, than of the productive power of the faculties themselves.

Language is a traditional thing, though its faculty be inherent in our common nature. No man invents his own speech; nor can it be supposed to be any thing originally but a divine endowment. To dogmatize, or to reason on the principles of religion, to whatever degree truthfully done, men are indebted to conditions of their faculties, *induced*—not *indigenous*. They have been ushered into a sphere, illuminated antecedently to their personal life; and have caught imperceptibly, but powerfully, the influences of society partially Christianized. Thus the later Platonists approximated to the Christian doctrine; yet, agreeably to the craftiness of modern sceptics, refused to own the real source of their emendations. They felt the power of the light newly risen on the world; but, true to the instincts of depraved nature, they adhered still to the all-sufficiency of human genius, and endeavoured to usurp and amalgamate the boon, whose real origin they ignored. Hence, too, sprang the refined elaborations of ancient sophistry, when setting itself to garnish with the elegancies of a mythos the nauseous, and puerile fables of the theogony; and to reduce these wild and senseless jargons to an apparent harmony with philosophic truth. In all cases, ancient or modern, Divine Truth is the only guide of mind. Men have no more *invented* their moral and religious sentiments, than the light of the firmament above them, or the civilization of

the country, whose advantages they enjoy. It is not, strictly speaking, *natural* reason, or *natural* religion, with which they are conversant, but reason and religion *adventitious*, though repudiated. The mental eminence has been gained by a ladder, afterwards thrown down as useless, by those who now assume a cherubic wing, floating proudly in the high regions of etherialism. But it is a mean and hollow artifice they have invented, who thus flatter themselves, and delude others. It is uttering against this fraud but a slight protest and condemnation, to brand it as the vilest of all plagiarisms; or, to point against it the irony of the fable of the bird, which decked itself in peacock's plumes. It is the very arrogance of impiety, which, disdaining to be beholden to God for that wisdom which he especially claims to bestow, not only appropriates it without gratitude, but wrests it to self-perversion, and public ruin. Until the question of divine revelation shall have been negatived, by an irrevocable verdict of those to whom it has been proposed, the abstract possibility of reason's sufficiency must be considered as actually superseded, and that it has no important bearing on the interests of mankind. The world *is not*, and *never was*, in a condition to try this question.

But such a fact is self-interpretive; suggesting also, what, indeed, the Bible affirms, that Revelation was a primitive super-addition to naturalistic teachings, and, in point of order, *antecedent* to them. This hypothesis well agrees with the miraculous outset, which the existing course of nature presupposes; and leads us to infer, that as both were blended in the constitution of the primeval state, so the subsequent form Revelation assumed, when this became deranged, was not a *novelty* in the divine rule, but a continuation of it, especially modified to altered circumstances. The sceptical principle, therefore, excludes the half—and the stronger half—of the primitive staple of a moral Rule. The mediate, and the immediate, as sources of communion with the Deity, being associated, the *necessity* of this collocation undoubt-

edly follows, and its actual permanency is as certain, as, in the present condition of the world, it is obviously paramount. Traditions, in the course of time, are either lost or mutilated. The race, in its surface developments, and surface accidents, would needs become dissevered from its first foci; and, disintegrated into innumerable fractions, would bear a fainter, and yet fainter impress of its family faith, and of its family blood. Hence, would arise the necessity for modes of conservation most agreeable to the laws of human society; for renewed interposition, or enlarged announcements. Incipiency would imply continuity and progression. The election of persons, or people, to certain offices would follow,—the gift of covenants and institutions, of laws and symbols,—all pertaining to the maintenance of one purpose,—the consummation of a grand remedial system for the world, fully sufficient to remove the evils of superstition, and false worship, incident to man, in all ages, and all conditions,—and also, that class of evils springing out of a stimulated intellectualism, among which, Pantheism and Atheism hold baneful pre-eminence.

Between the brood of mis-beliefs, and the extremes of no-belief, Revelation stands midway, as the grand poise and regulator of mind,—universally needed, as universally designed,—making the simple, wise; and the wise, humble. It is the *standard* of our opinions and moral sentiments,—fixed, impartial, perfect,—revealing a close affinity between the most extreme conditions of men, as they are ignorant of, or spurn its guidance; and detecting, as brilliant illusions, all ideas which men vaunt of progress in the path of a divine philosophy, when itself is left in the rear; and the experiment is still wrought on, of kindling up a transcendental glory from the powers of the steel, flint, and tinder-box.

The moral inanity, wild conjecture, unfair deduction, and special pleading, of Scepticism, (against what, with its array of evidences, and breadth of human embodiment, may well assume to be divine,) serve to suggest, as a close analogy to

its character, the hireling advocate, whose business is not with truth, or justice, but with his *cause* only; to whom a conscience would be a greater enemy than a tyrant to a slave, and whose fame and fortune are reared on the ruins of all that bears the dignity of a man.

A second fallacy of scepticism, is found in its absolute renunciation of the SUPERNATURAL in religion,—a manifest assumption, on its side, of the question at issue. This weak impertinency may well excite our wonder, from the professed disciples of philosophy; whose sole aim being to answer the question, "What is truth?" ought not to foreclose, what is not only fundamental to the controversy, but of the gravest consequence to the world. This is, in evidence, that dogmatic boldness is by no means peculiar to the advocates of faith, but is largely drawn upon by their opponents; and, with an inconsistency as ominous as it is flagrant. "Give me," said one, "where to place my lever, and I will move the world." This challenge is re-echoed by the champions of unbelief; but, wherever such ground may lie, assuredly their lever may not be allowed to rest on this datum, so as to overturn the faith. It cannot be allowed, for instance, that the uniformity of present experience, should be an absolute test of *all experience whatever*, either past or future. This would land us in the region of absurdity. Even geological facts, (to omit reference to any other,) would utter an effectual disclaimer against such presumptions, were the contrary testimony, in the inspired relation of the facts of creation, set aside. No appeal to Nature, to verify this oracle of unbelief, can meet with a favourable response. Nature gives it, most unequivocally, the lie. Besides, such a principle cannot be put forth, as fundamental to reasoning, against the claims of Revelation; unless the grounds on which it rests were shown to be unanswerable, or even probable—a task which we may pronounce utterly impossible. For who can be entitled to presume, that, in the plan of a divine administration respecting our world, no room was

left for the display of sovereign interpositions, in certain stages of its progress? or, that the *perfection of the plan itself* did not imply these? Especially were it blindly presumptuous to argue the opposite, in the face of facts, in the history and experience of man, most conflicting and mysterious.

There is, indeed, scarcely a point in Revelation, assailed by the blind impetuosity of unbelief, which has not its counterpart in the plainest facts of Providence; to contend against which, implies either idiocy, or worse than this, a rampant Atheism. The gist, however, of the sceptic objection, against the supernaturalism of revelation, is, like every other form of impiety, due to a *moral*, rather than an intellectual origin. Without any glimpses of a pristine glory, from which human nature has descended to the degeneracy of helplessness, bondage, and darkness together, it is devoid of sympathy with this fact, and of its auguries, however faint and enigmatic. It cannot discern the deep and frightful chasm which this convulsion has opened, between the former and the present state of man; and the impossibility of uniting these, but by an arch which the hand of Heaven has thrown across it.

Were even the feeble irradiations of the inward light regarded, the grand MORAL of Revelation could not fail of being seized, and the supernatural, or, rather, the divine, which revelation proclaims, would be readily accepted, as a necessary truth. Then the wonders of even *external* interposition, such as constitute the facts of the Bible, would be but simple reflections of this principle—as it were, outward and visible signs of movement, in the depths of the moral universe.

But, not further to impugn this sceptical position; a glance may be indulged at another offence against righteous dealing with the facts of revelation. It may be premised, that its purely *historical* character is a fundamental one, and a strong presumption in its favour; inasmuch as it is difficult to conceive how a revelation of universal and permanent use to the world, could be otherwise presented, than

by *facts* and *records*. If the supernatural be assumed as the basis, then it must be limited to particular ages, and modes of manifestation; or, it must be spread over the whole face of society, and be a fact of individual cognizance. But how could this latter supposition consist with the ordinary course of Providence? The supernatural coextant with the natural would lose its identity, and the principle of faith, as a moral criterion, would be obviously excluded.

The most *reasonable* theory is, assuredly, that which best harmonizes with the *indisputable facts of Providence*, which, with respect to all the springs of human advancement, lodges them in particular ages, localities, people, and characters. Everything multiplies from a unit—amplifies from a centre,—and is like a solitary seed, which, if duly husbanded, will in time overspread the world. This remark may be endlessly illustrated, and deserves to be pondered, because it is the very principle of the Bible; and, therefore, a strong mark of its divinity. Historically considered, its evidences are more perfect than those of any other ancient writings. They have been preserved with a care answerable to their unrivalled importance. Transcripts of them have been more varied and multiplied than those of any other book whatever; while the number, and diverse characteristics of its authors, taken in connexion with their moral and theologic unity, increase, not lessen the force of the evidence of its divine origin. Its system of prophecy has interwoven prescience with a mass of facts, so historically its own counterpart, as to make its divinity radiant on all, except those who blindly scoff at what they do not understand; and its golden chain of miraculous events, extending through so many centuries, and forming a wreath about the whole, were substantiated in commemorative ordinances, sacred song, acts of worship, and a familiar style of allusive recognition—not to add, by the peculiar principles of a polity, entirely based upon it. Of these wonderful phenomena no philosophical solution can be offered, but such as the history itself

supplies. Similar observations are applicable to the records of the Christian faith, which are clearly traceable up to the age of its birth. The fact that, from the earliest times, they were owned as the productions of those whose names they bear, and regarded as *inspired*, when a deluge of apocryphal and legendary writings had overflowed the Church, shows that their characters were broadly distinct to intelligent scrutiny, and that they had an unquestionable right to an exclusive supremacy, in the united judgment of those who, as unitedly, agree to discard forgeries.

As the writings of the Old Testament, faithfully preserved, were the mirror ever reflecting the divine image of religion, and witnessing against the corruptions which human infidelity had *foisted* into it, so the Christian Scriptures contain the self-expounding rationale of the Faith, and are stern witnesses against all the idolatrous and fraudulent intermixtures with which man has dishonoured it. Without these records, or the gift of permanent inspiration, pure Christianity must have very long since perished. The great seal which Providence has set upon their divinity, lies in the subservience of a human embodiment to the tradition of the record to be preserved, without which a historic credibility would have halted; and in not permitting, on the other hand, this human medium to corrupt so precious a deposit.

God has never separated the cause of his truth from a *living human testimony*. In this sense, the Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth"—even His cast-off people still holding, with the utmost tenacity, their portion of the sacred writings, while the Christian Church maintains the authority of their own Scriptures; but, in this instance, rendering it difficult to decide, whether faith or unbelief yields a stronger support to the authority of the whole. Hence, to class the Scripture histories with the romantic, absurd, and impious legends of Paganism, is nothing less than a wanton insult offered to the Bible. The authors of such fabrications, offer proofs of the reprobate, or undiscern-

ing mind, not less appalling than that with which St. Paul represents the worst of the heathen as judicially smitten. Further: to confound the sacred records with the clumsy fictions of the middle ages, or the forgeries of a religious despotism; to insinuate their lack of proper historic criteria, or doubts as to the honesty, or veracity of their authors; or, though discharging them from the enormity of intentional fraud, to transfer their extravagancies to the condition of their times; or modes of national thought and expression, without regard to the *moral* of the record; the circumstances under which it was put forth,—and the position they were placed in toward the world, who ventured to give it publicity:—these imputations are the climax of folly, and are in melancholy evidence of a deep estrangement of soul from Truth. What need we further witness of the terrible force of our Lord's own words, "men loved darkness rather than light?"

Perhaps the advocates of Revelation can hardly escape censure, as injudicious, for the course they have recently taken in upholding its claims. They have laid less stress upon the *external* than the internal evidences of Christianity: not that they have deemed these less truthful, or less important, than their predecessors; but that the investigation of the moral substance of the record alone was sufficiently convincing, and more in accordance with the taste of the age. This, however, is a very exceptionable proceeding; it is neither agreeable to the Divine order, nor to the reasons of the case. The external evidences, properly considered, are *initiatory*, and must, if established, settle the internal ones. Faith in the credentials of the Teacher must be prior to faith in his doctrine, whenever it shall rise above the level of our reason. To place reason, in the first instance, in the position of a judge of the doctrine submitted to it, is to suppose the doctrine itself superfluous, or, at least, *not authoritative;* but the authority of the teacher once established, by evidence extrinsic to his

communications, reason binds us to accept them as articles of faith, though it should be unable to reduce them, at any time, to knowledge. It is no marvel that this indiscretion should have been perceived and abused by Scepticism, for its own ends. It obviously tends to obliterate the line which divides the objective and the subjective of religion; to impair the substances and strength of revelation, as God himself has made it—a matter-of-fact affair—a TESTIMONY; and to prepare the way for a final and successful assault upon the matter of the testimony itself.

The consummating element of the warfare of unbelief with the Bible, is found in its contemptuous rejection of the *doctrine of inspiration;* which, even if not self-announced, and steadily maintained by the Church, through all ages, is an irresistible inference from the nature of the facts and doctrines contained in the Scriptures, together with the purposes of God in giving such records to the world. It is impossible to admit that they may be paralleled by human compositions, or be confounded with the efforts of human genius; they could not answer their ends, as *declarative and authoritative documents*, or, in other words, as the *vehicle of supreme law* to man, infallible only, because *inspired*. No great questions could be referred to them, as to a last tribunal, unless they were, what St. Paul terms them,—"GOD-BREATHED." In this glory they stand alone; nor is it any presumption against this position, that they are stamped by this divine peculiarity with Incommunicableness, as by a sovereign fiat. God has enthroned them in this glorious eminency; and he has not continued the gift in other forms of record, or in the successive generations of the living Church, because it was unnecessary. His whole mind on the highest questions of His rule, and of man's nature, duty, and destiny, is comprised in the offices of redemption; beyond this, there is no succession of related objects to him, in the line of an endless future. The echoes of God's voice, through eighteen centuries, vibrate

as strongly as in the days when he spake to us by His Son; and the silence which the world is compelled to own, when deaf to these, is as confirmitory a sign, that the last seal has been broken by the Lamb, as it would be by the continuity of heavenly-attested communications. But inspiration, if admitted, compels submission to its dictates, under threats of pains and penalties for the recusant. If it be law, this is inevitable, because duty to God must, in part, consist in reverent acceptance of his missives,—that is, in believing His testimony, as well as in obeying His commands. In this relative position of the Bible and unbelievers, it is obvious, that if they assail it with any other weapons than those of wit, banter and blasphemy, they have no alternative, but to employ false criticism, astute sophistry, and the most versatile resources of innuendo. They must either surrender themselves to its plain and honest meaning, (because it were a solecism that Revelation should meet man on any other ground than common sense,) or they must bring down Scripture to their own standard—that is, palm fictitious meanings upon its language. On the former supposition, they would be unbelievers no longer; by adopting the alternative, the futility of their endeavours is not less striking than their impiety—to rationalize or mythicize the Bible being simply a literary burlesque;—proving nothing, but that this whole class of anti-biblical meddlers need strong doses of hellebore—the ancient panacea for madness.

It is a more manly, and, perhaps, less criminal act, to repudiate the Scriptures at once, than to toil in the fabrication of meanings for them obviously alien from even the field of fair conjecture,—which it would be ridiculous to apply to any species of human authorship,—and converting the most stern and veritable of all witnesses into a mere puppet of human dogmatism. In this direction, as St. Paul wrote to Timothy, "they shall proceed no further;" for "their folly is manifest to all men."

All these attempts to force the Bible to symbolize with a false philosophy, only serve to show their fixed contrariety. They fairly join issue—Bible, or no Bible, is the only question worthy of dispute: and he that shall take the negative as his judgment—with the onus of a terrible responsibility—must, nevertheless, be allowed the wisdom of refusing to arbitrate in the preposterous task of reconciling contradictions.

The *fruit* of sceptical aberration, is forever the same baneful, and anti-human thing. A divine standard of religious judgment being abandoned, confusion must ensue. It is the loss of the rudder to the ship, in its course over the waves, or of the compass by which its destiny is reached. The natural inability of man for self-direction, so peculiarly bewrayed in religious matters, when the Truth is divorced, becomes prolific in speculative vanities. Nothing is fixed, nothing is trusted. One foundation after another is ploughed up, until a bottomless pit is uncovered, into which human interests are rapidly flung; and which, insatiate as the grave, still demands more. Even a PURE THEISM cannot maintain itself apart from Revelation. The Deity himself is lowered immeasurably to human apprehension, by the reign of that negativeism, which enthrones itself on the desolation of every monument of His interposing power and grace on man's behalf. He sinks into a mere Author of Nature,—perhaps even below this,—as the co-eternity and co-extension of matter with Himself, and its consequent limitation of his agency, would seem to be the necessary conditions of all nature, and of all events.

That from such a chaos of sentiment great social evils should ensue, is as proper an effect as any which it falls within the range of reason and experience to expect. Of anti-christian tenets, a practical Atheism is the proper counterpart, engendering great vices, and small virtues; huge professions of philanthropy and enlargement, with a tyrannical selfishness, which sucks everything into its own

Maelstrom. Unbelief, as a negative, combines in it the forces of a most destructive positive. It unlooses the zone of all human relations. It disbands everything from its benignant office, and gives to everything hurtful, unlimited commission to do its work. It leaves no pillars, either to ornament or support the social edifice. It dissolves the spell from which all human spheres draw the music of their order. It inflames the passions, and annihilates the conscience. It deifies self, but destroys virtue; and is degraded below the basest idolatry, as the penalty of refusing worship to the God of the Bible. Its ripe development in society is Socialism, in its many hues, and with its levelling and bloody maul; which, were it allowed to bestride the earth, would show a monster-birth of evil, unknown to former ages, even of our wicked and hapless world. The worst passions of men, enlarged to almost preternatural capacity by a far advanced civilization, and lashed into fury by Atheistic fanaticism, would revel in the destruction of the vast and fair domains of modern life. The havoc of the conqueror, the cruelty of the tyrant, and the feuds of the savage, would no longer appear crimes or calamities in our eye, when this demon should have blasted the world, and have made it one vast heap of smouldering, putrefying, ruins.

Amidst these reveries of idealism, the sobrieties of moral truth are unheeded, and its most awful oracles speak in vain. The disorders and miseries of the mind appeal fruitlessly for consideration, and relief, to an infidel transcendentalism; which is as barren of resources and of sympathy, as it is of truth. It leaves all the phenomena of *moral* existence unaccounted for; and its very partiality bewrays its folly. The training of the intellect to the neglect of the heart, is, as all experience proves, no royal road to either virtue, or happiness; serving neither the present nor the future weal of man. It sheds but a stronger light on the yawning gulf within him, rendering the darkness that surrounds him more

palpable, and awful. It corrects no mischiefs in the spirit, it alters no one feature of human apostasy, nor breaks man's relation to a penal future. As the first, and all destroying sin, was begotten equally of the intellect and the desire; so is its type perpetuated in every variety of its dreadful progeny. The pathway to perdition opens through the INTELLECT, as well as through the VICES OF THE FLESH; but the visage of the arch-fiend is alone reflected from the former, and his deadliest inspiration is wafted from the master-spirits of an age, through the world. To speak through genius, erudition, and science, is the climax of Satanic wile; and *to poison knowledge in its fountains is to drug whole communities with fatal success.*

Perverted intellect, ever in alliance with the vices of the heart, casts over them all a shield, which blunts every weapon of truth, and imparts to impiety an air of assurance, and stoical resolve. Its breath is vanity, even when it does not generate corruption. Its inspiration is pride,—a perverse, disputatious subtilty,—masking its hatred to truth under a pretended regard to freedom of inquiry, and its secret contempt for all religion under a liberal arbitration between the claims of contending sects. Availing themselves of the divided and diversified aspects of Christendom, the adversaries insinuate, that faith is simply a matter of opinion, a circumstance, or an accident of existence, involving just as little interest as accountability; while devotion and morals are represented as anterior principles of the soul, and therefore independent of all religious systems and professions, whether Scriptural or otherwise. In fine, the drift of literary labour and press-agency at present, is expressive of an aim to secure a complete ascendency over the public mind, to the depression, if not exclusion, of *religious rule*, in this, as in every other department of human influence and interest. Its tendency,—though not often avowed, perhaps not always designed,—is to fence off, not a mere province to itself, but the whole mental empire of the age; and to leave re-

ligion to decline and perish by the withdrawment from it of all the mental energies and sympathies of nations. It offers no worship,—it sheds no honour upon religion, as the one science of God and man. It yields no aid to Christian truth. It has no sympathy with it. It rears for it no outworks of defence, and certainly brings no glory into the Holy City. Its heartless neutrality is as criminal, and perhaps more injurious, than its most determined onslaughts, whether directed against the principles of Christianity, or the characters and enterprises of its disciples. Their conscientious adherence to the Bible, as the arbiter of State questions, and national morals, is the severest reproof of its latitudinarianism; and their practical, well-sustained philanthropy, the heaviest condemnation of its inherent selfishness.

Further, it may be added, that an age of expansion, big with excitement and change, is hardly one conditionally receptive, or strongly retentive of religious power. It is too generally kept in motion; or too absorbent of extraneous element, to be deeply charged with *one only*. Like the Athenians, it is engrossed with "hearing, or telling some new thing"—with adding some fresh statue to its temple of fame, or the niches of its Pantheon. Ingenuity and talent are taxed to perpetuate a series of attractions; while, the more complicated is the mechanism of life, the more is it liable to exhaustion. Crowded scenes, and reiterated impressions, as rapidly efface, as they succeed each other; they are too many to be severally retained,—too rapid to convey each its perfect individuality. The man must drop much on his way that he takes up in the beginning, or he would be overborne by his load; and too often, childlike, he drops the precious, and retains the vile.

To impregnate man religiously, amidst all this tumult of vicissitude, becomes the prime difficulty. He is as a man in a crowd, only seen at intervals, and impacted, where individuality is as little appreciated, as liberty is enjoyed.

Religion becomes but one item in life's long inventory: it offers no novelty, it parades no bribes, often no circumstantial commendations. Its Sabbaths, sanctuaries, ministers, people, doctrines, symbols, are institutional things; recognised elements and forms of national being—nothing more. He can see them, as he sees other things, but without apprehending their UNSEEN correspondences. Impelled by the tastes, or urgencies of his life, he fulfils his routine of citizenship, of merchandise, or of professional engagement; he alternates between his family, his business, and his recreations; but he passes by religion, which, perhaps, instrumentally, has never reached him; or his early induction into its paths has been forgotten, like his cradle, or, his leading-strings. An intermediate haze, and crowd of worldly things, have severed him from them, and beguiled and besotted him, till time has led him to the brink of the grave.

But, of all the causes operative to modify the forms, and to leaven the spirit of society, politics have, of late years, been the most predominant. All classes have been moulded by the action of great contending principles and parties in the state. The influence of these debates and struggles, upon the middle and lower orders, has been immense. Their power has been vastly augmented in swaying the destinies of the country, and in re-fashioning the whole economy of the state. The general result of these movements is, to bring the governors and governed into fuller correspondence, and greatly to reduce the distance and the inequality between them. The creation of a popular, political, spirit in the country, has given vigour to every form of social expression; with a proportionate degree of individual, as well as of class, importance. How far the interests of religion, as a whole, may have been advanced or repressed by this strong, and in some respects new, element of social life, it may not be easy correctly to determine. It has undoubtedly fostered a spirit of independence, favourable to freedom of inquiry,

and impartiality of decision. A fully emancipated citizen would be prompt to exercise his rights in the choice of his religion, as well as in the conduct of his secular interests. He would become more accessible to argument; less prejudiced and prescriptive in his notions; less rigid in his adherence to old institutions; less venerative and submissive; more inclined to discard what was patronized, and to adopt what might appear simply right, or useful in religion; though not imposing, but even persecuted. To break down *caste* in spirituals, as in temporals, is the plain result of popular freedom and of social fusion. So far, religion seems to have gained by these changes: but it is more doubtful how far the benefit has been realized; or whether it has not been neutralized, and even counterbalanced, by the combination of other influences. Whether religion, in the abstract, has not been lowered as a human interest, by the uplifting of merely worldly objects to a disproportionate magnitude and elevation; by a ceaseless and violent play of the strongest passions of our nature, either to destroy, or to defend; by the jealousies it has aroused against everything dogmatic, even in religion, and against their character, whose office it is to support and propagate it. It may be feared, that by the operation of these principles, religion has been shorn of much of its sanctity and power. It has suffered from the suspicion that has attached to its advocates, tending to clip office so closely, as to destroy its "superscription," and mutilate its "image;" and inducing, in the mind of the populace at least, a preference for the pretended political regenerator over the minister of religion; teaching it to regard the one as the friend—the other as an enemy—to the onward movement of the race. The lees of this cup, which, drunk off by the nation, produced an inebriation from which it has scarcely recovered, have intoxicated the populace to frenzy. They feel but one woe, and clamour for one remedy. *Their* jubilee is the Charter, not the Gospel.

Whenever the lot of the artisan is one of privation and

suffering, a ground is supplied, both for political disaffection, and infidel obduracy. Religion and society, as they exist mutually entwined, are viewed as but two faces of one tyranny, whose downfall must usher in the grand era of liberty and public weal. The heavy hardships entailed on the working classes, cannot but be greatly deteriorative of their spirit and character, of their respect for station, of their cordial acquiescence in *existing social organization*, and of their sympathy with what is national. Their patriotism and loyalty are overborne. Sullen, and discontented, they become the easy dupes of political fanatics, and atheistic levellers, under the amiable appellation of Socialists. Every political change, every turn of events, is watched by them with a morbid interest, as big with the promise of amelioration. They feel warranted by the evils they endure, to abet measures reckless in change and subversion, as culprits are to adopt any schemes for effecting their escape from the clutches of the law. The sense of injury, the sting inflicted by a wrong,—whether in individuals, or in classes of men,—is restlessly retaliative; it waits for an opportunity to transfix its victim, and is lulled into silence like the tempest, only to rage with more destructive force. Recent events have tested the presence of this feeling in the popular mind to an alarming degree; nor has the expression of it, in the sudden catastrophe of a revolution, been repressed, but by the demonstration of a moral and an armed force, rendering the project hopeless. The apathy, if not hostility, of the masses towards religion, is but too sure an inference from these events. The unwelcome conviction cannot be repelled, that their minds are too fully engrossed with a *political* salvation, to desire a *spiritual* one; that they too resolutely overlook the *moral* disorders found in connexion with *temporal* evils, to discern the true remedy for them; and that, until this favourite experiment shall have been made, and proved abortive, all appeals to conscience and religion will be regarded but as the babblings

of ignorance, in support of a falling cause; or the artifices of hypocrisy, to divert them from the pursuit of their dearest rights.*

CHAPTER VI.

CHURCH REQUISITES.

"Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?"—CANTICLES.

But if the aspects of society on the Church be especially characteristic, and, as such, deserving of great consideration; those of the Church on the world are of still higher moment. The contemplation of powers in immediate connexion with, and destined to act upon, each other, is profoundly stirring, when the causes and issues of their opposition involve the chief interests of mankind. Nor is the consideration of one opponent force of practical value, but as it casts us upon computing the other, and the probabilities, that hence arise, as to the side on which victory will come forth. In this case, the Church is the sole and proper antagonist to the world. It is empire arrayed against empire. It is God's power brought out under conditions suitable to a human medium, and for human issues, against the representative, and the instruments of moral evil. The world, the whole world, is capable of a grand transition from the one dominion to the other, because it is the subject of Christ's redemption. Hence the power which God leagues with his Church, is not one which, ranging on this wide basis, cannot but act; nor is that opposed to it, put forth to accomplish ends which could not have been prevented. Both act upon what may be termed the *principle of contingency;* and upon this ground, both forces have room to expand themselves.

* [Most strikingly do these paragraphs show, whether the author intended it or not, how fearful an obstacle to the progress of religion a false Social System may be.—AM. ED.]

Hence the adaptation of the Church to its great work, in any particular age, or country, is of vital importance to the prospects of religion; as it respects both its spread and its perpetuation. Then, the question how far it is answerable to its primitive model, or has declined from it, if fairly settled, (though it should not warrant the utterance of a prophecy as to the complexion of a remote future,) would, at least, serve to explain existing facts, and perhaps enable us to read the prognostics of approaching times.

To begin with the THEOLOGY of the Church. As this is its foundation, it seems most pertinent to the inquiry now proposed. With respect to this most important subject it may be inquired, how nearly the great subjects of Christian belief are held, at this day, in the churches of our land, apart from those questions in doctrine which may fairly be deemed secondary, or controvertible? And if, in general, these great leading articles be maintained, how far they actually rule the minds of professing men, or even the public expositors of these divine mysteries?

Orthodoxy is, indeed, less necessarily vital and productive of its proper ends than error, because the latter is always enforced by, as it speaks to, the corruptions of our nature; whereas the former may be wholly repressed, by the very causes which impart to error a triumphant ascendency. Truth may be practically negatived, by the coldness and alienation of the heart, though admitted as an intellectual visitant, entire and resplendent, as the Bible itself. The state of human nature, as fallen, shows that truth cannot be necessarily sanctifying; while the experiment continually going on, in so many minds of different capabilities, tastes, and complexions, with a result so disappointing and portentous, proves both the necessity of a Divine influence to assist and rectify the mind, and also its power to resist, as well as to yield to, this influence. Thus, *orthodoxy* does by no means imply *religion* in its possessor. It may stand alone in his mind, and in reproving contrast with his heart

and practice. For the same reason, it may be set on high in individuals, and in churches, without any corresponding degree of religious energy. The general tone of piety may be feeble, and utterly insufficient for public effect; while the doctrinal staple of the times may be tolerably pure. The truth is not, indeed, held "in unrighteousness," but restrained, by various causes, from carrying on its work to the uttermost. Its maximum is not realized, its action is not vigorous, its omnipotence is far from being demonstrated in keeping with its history, or as the Church desires, and as the world needs. Though free and unassailed, without bonds, or adversaries, rising up to challenge its authority, or suppress its publication, its domain is restricted as if geographically defined; and as doubtfully held, as if its tenure was contingent as that of mere human opinion. They who are engaged to uphold and circulate the truth, seem unable to arouse the slumbering masses around them, or to provoke a contest with the adversaries, who wave it through disdain, or even sheer indifference. It would seem that truth's destiny, in such a world as ours, is first persecution, and then neglect; and that she must oscillate continually between these two extremes of human impiety. Indifference, however, not hostility, is the dreaded foe of truth. In an element purely neutral, truth cannot act; to be successful, it must evoke interest—stimulate by provocation, or subdue by conviction. It must agitate strongly, or the mental condition is wanting for its entrance and victory. What, in fact, does the history of its birth and early progress testify on this point? Were they noiseless times, and unimpassioned spirits, that ushered it into life, cradling it for conquest and for empire? Or can we conceive it possible, that its chronicled achievements could have been accomplished, and its monuments of conquest, remaining to this day in almost every land, have been reared, had not the world been roused as by the successive shocks of an earthquake, and men been subjected to

the strongest impulses of their nature, for and against its progress?

This observation is remarkably borne out by the records of the Reformation, and of every subsequent revival of religion. Each of these grand movements necessarily created new and strong modes of public feeling; demanding these as the conditions of progress and triumph. They were like the breaking up of ice-bound seas, and frozen regions, by the power of the returning sun; or, as the motion of the living principle, everywhere bursting into beauty and perfection under the wand of Spring. They were like Christ's appearance in the land of the Jews—casting out devils, and raising the dead. In every such instance, the dark reign of sin is invaded; and Satan deposed, when his goods are in peace. Then truth appears omnipotent, in the mighty works which it effects; and divinely beautiful, in contrast with the dismal superstitions, and impious dotages, then forsaken. It is, indeed, "marvellous light," which has suddenly flashed upon this inveterate and infernal darkness. Men gaze upon this scene of wonders with astonishment; they are enchanted by the spell of this stupendous revelation. They conceive strongly of every gospel truth, as opposed to some damning error—some soul-enslaving ordinance—some onerous imposition of men. A human religion is now put down by the glory of a divine one; and they who are so happily enlightened by it, think, feel, resolve, and act up to the very pitch of their powers. They are, indeed, "new creatures." The force of discovery, combined with hard struggling for the experimental knowledge of the truth, and after sufferings for its sake, gives a mighty impulse to every outset of a genuine revival.

Christianity always begins her career of conquest with a full outlet of her resources in her chosen servants. In this respect, nothing comes *thus direct* from heaven as a "good gift," but it is "perfect" also; whatever degeneracy may

be entailed upon it afterwards by human unfaithfulness to so high a trust. Powerful mental awakenings, sore conflicts with evil, the working of Satan and the good Spirit, in vehement contrariety, in the same breast, with the issue of a heaven-born emancipation,—mighty as a translation from hell to heaven,—cannot but impress the full image of Divinity upon the truth that originated it. There has descended the *moral inspiration* of truth—not merely her intellectual form; "the light of life"—not simply that which heralds life, but which begets it; afterwards expanding and perfecting it, as it forms the shrine in which it clothes itself, and thence breaks forth in glory and beauty. Hence, a fervid evangelism is ever embodied in the first impulses of spiritual life. Men not merely throw off the incubus of tradition and superstition, or repudiate the worthless and foolish customs which have superseded the "reasonable service" of the Christian faith; they do not merely adopt creeds, or draw up protests and confessions, declaratory of a mental independence, and to uphold a right of which they have long been deprived; they enthrone the TRUTH AS DIVINE; they love her because she is the image of Christ, and the vehicle of salvation. It is a supernatural, not a human ardour which enflames them. It is not the assurance of reason, but the testimony of God within them, that kindles the enthusiasm of believing souls, and converts them into witnesses, such as were the apostles, "to the uttermost parts of the earth."

It is the office of the Holy Spirit to give a strong working theology to the world. It depends far less on human teaching and research, than on his inspiration, perpetuated in the Church, as "the Spirit of truth"—an appellation certainly not bounded by his primary office in the apostles, but including his deep, vital action upon the soul, in connexion with the study of the Sacred Oracles, his silent, mighty, breathings within the breast, infusing truth, and clearing away the blindness, perverseness, death, which sin has cast

upon it. His unction is that in which all the grace, power, and life of truth consist; the very substance and soul of all revelations from heaven. This reception of truth, renders a man a living representative of its divinity, and a powerful instrument for its diffusion. His use of truth is nothing *professional;* its effects in him amount to something far higher than a simple modification of religious belief, or of moral character. It is a *regenerative* power, which becomes endlessly reproductive. The "children of the light" are spoken of in Scripture, as a race created by the truth, whose fairest type is seen in the day; and therefore diffusive as well as assimilative. As it is the truth which the Holy Spirit implants in man, as the vehicle and type of his higher life, so is its perfect impression necessary to the dominion of religion in the Church, and, through the Church, in the world. The Church must be strongly moved, to ponder, and to publish it; the world, to hearken to, and believe it. Faint ideas are powerless; they convey no influence, and compel no energy.

The Gospel cannot sink down to the level of common topics, or human sciences, without a vast degeneracy of feeling in the Church; and without entailing upon itself a weakness, and a circumscription, dismally ominous. Who would set the earth higher than the heavens, or compare the works of God with the productions of men?—the truth that saves, with the inventions which, indeed, embellish life, but leave untouched the moral plague of our race?—or which, developing man's earthly powers, shut out the prospects of his immortality, and leave him no interests beyond the grave? The Gospel, as its name imports, stands alone, in sublime and awful interest, as an authenticated revelation from God; while, as conveying to man His will, it demands a truce to the multitude of contending claimants for human regard; a silence among men, when its roll is opened, such as obtains among angels themselves, when the great book of destiny is loosed in heaven. It demands, by its dignity and importance, a class of emotions altogether peculiar. They who hold,

and they who listen to it, are not in the ordinary positions of their existence. No lessons of philosophy, no questions of public interest, or personal advantage, can be paralleled with this business. *This* is God's embassy to the world, involving man's duty and destiny. Religion must stand alone in majesty, in rights, in sanctions. Men must come forth, as did Israel out of the camp, to meet with God. God now talks with men; and men must hear, or perish? Nor can the truth ever receive its proper homage, or produce its proper effects, till this position of the parties is recognised.

This result may be difficult, but its necessity proves that it is not impossible; and that such a measure of responsibility is shared amongst those concerned, as leaves them guilty of damaging the one great interest of God and man when this state of thought and feeling is come short of. This danger is, moreover, more eminent in tranquil times, and easy circumstances, than in those of hazard and restriction. A question never debated, raises no interest; a right never opposed, is all but valueless. Truth admitted, is truth neglected—cheap, because common, though its value lies mainly in this fact. How transported were the hearts of men when truth dawned first upon them, after centuries of darkness! With what rapture did our ancestors welcome the translation of the Bible, eagerly intent on securing a copy for private use; or, on reading it, when deposited, and even chained, in the churches! With what heroism did they meet danger, and endure persecution the most bitter and deadly, when struggling to loose the yoke of Papal Antichrist from the neck of the nation, and to found again the monarchy of religion upon its own heavenly and eternal rescript of inspired truth! Or, when maintaining, in some respects, a more galling warfare against uncongenial forms,—the despotism of the hierarchy, or the usurpations of the state,—all penalties were braved, in the spirit of meek, but unbending, resolution; and life, and all things with it, were flung

into the scale, for truth, conscience, liberty, godliness! Nor, in the last gush of Christian life, which has so greatly blessed our age, and enriched the world, do we trace anything so remarkable as the *power of truth*,—moulding its people to its own ends. Their principles, and instincts, alike flowed from it. It was the one idea of the intellect, and the master passion of the heart. They despised the mere circumstances of its appearance: the street, the cottage, the field, were, like the upper room at Jerusalem, or the mountains of Galilee, equally attractive, and hallowed as the stateliest shrine, by the representative of Christ—the truly anointed, though not always recognised—herald of the Gospel. The treasure was then, as in apostolic days, "in earthen vessels," rather than in those of silver and gold.

Religion, then, rising as if from the tomb,—where she had long lain in corruption, decently, and even splendidly, buried, under monuments far older than her latest youth,—seemed more glorious in her simple, uncultured grace, than when more courtly; as the Baptist, issuing from the borders of the wilderness, to begin his mighty mission; or Jesus, from Nazareth, to illumine and redeem the world. The very hazards and difficulties of their position, served only to brace up their spirits for enterprise; and to inspire them with the heroism of men, who stake everything upon the fortunes of a campaign, or the chances of a battle. They *felt* what, at this day, we coldly admit: that to retain the truth they must propagate it; that they owed this debt to their contemporaries, as did Paul to the Greeks and barbarians—the wise and the unwise; that, whatever else was important to the world, this was primary and essential—vital, saving. There was a simplicity in them, always paramount; springing from the depth of their convictions, rather than the lack of mental enlargement: or if, indeed, it were childish, in the view of the world, it was the note of a divine greatness; it imparted force to character, and unity to action. It gathered the man up from the field of worldly distraction,

and plied him fully in one great task; agreeably to the apostolic motto,—"This one thing I do."

In the preservation of this enthusiastic love of the truth, its disciples not only became its representatives, but its vehicles. They breathed it upon the world; they engraved its name upon everything they touched; and held the secret of a moral alchymy more valuable, and more wonderful, than that of the philosopher's stone, which turned everything into gold. In comparing past times with our own, this pre-eminent influence of the truth, and thoroughgoing championship for its cause, appear seriously to have waned. The force of discovery no longer aids us; the transports of novelty have subsided; the excitements of its primitive triumphs have passed away with the generation which witnessed them. We have neither broken away from the thraldom of superstition, nor from the icy grasp of a lifeless formalism. Ours is not an age of theological contests, nor of religious persecutions. None seem bent on seizing our patrimony; or driving us, by the polemics of the pen, or the enactments of the state, from our articles and our sanctuaries. We have known no wars,—we hear no alarms. Hence, we hardly feel that we have anything to lose. We are paralyzed by this somnolent tranquillity; and become heedless, from the monotony of our times. Men are not strongly *committed* to their principles. The worth of truth is but dimly seen; nor the majesty of conscience, which, itself the eye and image of the truth, arbitrates by no earthly rules, nor for earthly ends; finding a rest in righteousness which no terrors can disturb, and no inferior good augment. Cognizant of God only, it holds to Him, as Athanasius is said to have done, against the world; accounting nothing necessary but its own integrity; nothing great, but God's honour; nothing blessedness, but his favour, by which all the perfections of a fresh existence are secured, rising from the last wreck of all things,—as it now realizes the basis of an indestructible greatness, in its

own moral condition. On this great point of religious integrity, the tone of our age is relaxed and feeble. While the world has been liberalized to indifference, or scepticism, by the twofold action of politics and philosophy; the Church has been chilled by her contact with the same elements. She has too little regarded her perils, or pondered her position: she has grasped her weapons but feebly, and put herself forth before the world with too much diffidence.

In an age when knowledge is disassociated, to a wide extent, from religion, in the persons of its chiefs, and the channels in which it flows through the land, a certain unfriendly occupancy, rather than a simply negative condition of the public mind, must be counted upon; and the suggestion becomes irresistible, that evangelism, to secure a chance of acceptance, must seek an alliance with the various departments of secular science, and become blended with the prevailing style of taste and intelligence —but without a distinct embodiment, or a transforming mastery. The march of discovery, and of popularized science, upon the mind of the age, has drawn away, and detained it, from the vision of heavenly truth. It has cast a fictitious glare upon it, which, for the time, has rendered it insensible to the glory of revealed wisdom. Its effect has been almost *pyrotechnic*, on the mass. It seems to demand darkness for the display of its wonders; such a fixedness and absorption of mind upon terrene objects, as imports the withdrawment of divine ones from the scene.

As *rivals*, science and religion cannot co-exist, any more than planets can move, in opposite directions, in the same sphere; or the worship of the true God may consist with that of heroes and demi-gods, or of the images of gold, wood, and stone. The *end of things* must contain the reason of the irexistence; the *principle of all rule*, as well as of their respective attributes, confessed. This, with respect to man, must imply something greater *than man him-*

self; (much more than any one of the many possible applications of his faculties;) and must, therefore, needs be sovereign over his destiny. The relative and illustrative aspects of science are, in this view, chiefly estimable. Its absolute subordination is, therefore, reasonable; its *co-ordination* with religion, absurd.

The certain issue of this mal-position, is a perfect carnival of intellectual wantonness,—the last excesses of Infidelity and Atheism. The moral effects of such an intellectual transition upon society, are as obvious as they are natural. The lecturer fills greater space in the public eye than the teacher of religion; and the institutions and associations of politics and philosophy, absorb much of the intellectual and moral energy that should be directed to higher things. Little, if any, taste is shown, even for the philosophy of religion; while the conscience, and the heart, must remain untouched, by that which fails to secure to itself the supremacy of the thoughts. Not only is its domain abridged, but its sceptre is broken. Its claims are not estimated by its evidencs, or its importance, but simply by its power to interest and to please; while its business is to impress, and to convert,—to abase man, and to exalt God. Hence, a superficial culture of the intellect, or a pleasurable exercise of it, is made the *end* of human effort; not a *means* to its moral advancement, and to conformity with the standard of a divine rectitude,—the only cardinal difference between a demon and an angel; the vilest of mortals and the glorious image of Jesus Christ.

Every demand is for invention, which is taxed to exhaustion. Genius and talent are extolled as loftier gifts than apostolic inspiration, while evangelism and commonplace are put in the same category. Now, it is plain, that the bare impression, on the public mind, that the intellect of the age is against, at least not with, religion, must, in itself, be an enormous evil, though it should be a humiliating truth. Neither its sole, nor its worst consequence;

however, is traced in the tone of the public men, and the leading characters of the day,—who too often betray a loose and careless, or a cynical, or semi-infidel temper, when religious questions come before them:—it is embodied in the great staple portion of the community; pervading them with a deep taint of self-complacency and empiricism,—in strange contrast with the simplicity and veneration of former times,—qualities, which, if not safeguards against the dominion of vice, are the necessary prerequisites to the access of truth; and which, if not strictly principles, present not the irreligious antagonisms of bad ones. In this respect, the Church is surrounded with difficulties formerly unknown. Its work is no longer limited to the simple occupancy of a vacant territory. It must wage war with tribes of giant errors, already fortified, and in possession; as did Israel of old, against the sons of Anak, in their fenced cities, and chariots of iron.

In the progress of society, every form of irreligion has become more salient and industrious, borrowing some of the tactics of its warfare from the Church herself. Religion has not merely been parodied in her doctrines, but in her organization and operations; as the orang-outang and the ape parody man. Never, perhaps, was the Church in a more embarrassed position than at present, with respect to her relations to society. Enjoying the most perfect security and freedom of action, her inability to turn these advantages to her own account was never more manifest. The constantly augmenting masses of surrounding people, seem to commence their career of being, under other auspices than hers; and to live and die with as little regard for her doctrines, institutions, and blessings, as the inhabitants of China feel for the government and people of England. The Church and society co-exist, like the land, water, and atmosphere of the globe,—in combination, without assimilation; in perpetual juxtaposition, but without transmutation.

To meet this particular feature in the times, teaching is required, of more than an ordinary degree of skill and power. The close student, and the practical man, should be combined; a strong originality, and force of intellect, with stores of learning, should be joined with evangelic fervour, and the simplicity of a child. The truth, to be set on high, requires a stately candlestick, and the concentration of a body of light, to which the eyes of all turn, as by instinct. It requires such mastery of intelligence, such profundity of erudition and seraphic zeal, as shall make her, to the vision of earth, what the "lamps of fire" are to those who dwell around the throne of God.

The *grandeur* of truth must be seen, or her *inspiration* cannot be felt, nor her all-compelling might, urging on in the path of duty; as worlds, flung into space, untiringly course around their respective centres, proclaiming the doctrine of order, as well as of power, while they move, and creating "fulness of joy" within the realms of being, to us unseen. To this, not *ideal* of a ministry only, but *craving demand* of the age, the Bible itself is wonderfully correspondent. It is evidently designed to be the book of all times and ages, comprising every stage of human development, and including the sum total of all intelligence that ever was, is, and shall be. It immeasurably overspreads all intellect, as the heavens do the tops of the mountains, and the bosoms of the vallies alike; and sheds equal light and influences upon the hyssop, and the cedar—upon the reptile, and the man, as being integrals of the same system, and forms moulded by the same Almighty hand.

As well may men imagine that they have gathered the last grains of gold from the earth, or the last pearl from the depths of the sea, as that they have exhausted that book which contains more than the universe, besides itself,—"THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST." The principles, illustrations, and applications, of any and every branch

of philosophy, may, in the progress of the human mind, become fixed and ultimate; but not so the Divine science of the Scriptures, in the study of which angels are associated with men. This is indefinite,—it "passeth knowledge,"—and the teaching of the day should exemplify this wonderful fact; not lingering behind the march of other things, and being rigid as with age, while everything around it is green with youth, and expansive as life. It should be as the light, which awakens all nature into activity and power; as the sun in the heavens, which marshals and tinges the very clouds with gorgeous hues, and summons the entire domain of the firmament to form his retinue, to reflect his glory, and to do him homage, both in his orient and setting hours.

It is the absence of a vigorous, and deep-toned theology from the Church, and society at large, which marks our age as one of degeneracy, compared with those immediately succeeding the great Reformation; when truth was so princely in its champions, and glorious in its sway; not only rich in its provision for the living, but in legacies to posterity; with the mere surplusage of its stores, replenishing centuries of the future; and leaving to them little more to do than to appropriate, and to wonder at, the genius, industry, and erudition, comprised in these treasures of sacred lore. These, though so noble a heritage to us,—the veriest wealth of our fatherland,—supply no incense to the altar of our vanity; being pregnant with evidence, that, with all our boasting, we are not better than our fathers, nor "wiser than the ancients."

The ages which produced such works, must have been more divinely imbued with wisdom than our own. They speak for those times, as the languages and artistic relics of Greece and Rome speak to us of their bygone glories. The national mind must have been more deeply charged with the *religious element* than it has ever been since. The forces that so strongly moved it, must have acted far be-

neath the surface; or these mountains could not have been cast up, in height and figure, so massive and commanding. This change in the religious bias of the nation, renders its Protestantism as insecure as its evangelization is hindered by it. The link that should have bound it to the early ages of its spiritual emancipation, is attenuated, if not dissolved. It is cold, if not reproachful in its temper, towards its most illustrious benefactors. It has no fixed principles of religion to give it unity with the past, or guidance through the future. It wears no deep lineaments of ancestral traduction. It cherishes no sympathies toward the one great thing, on which our fathers hung the whole sphere of the state, and from which they drew the very life-blood of the polity.

The great want of our day is the re-instalment of truth in her olden supremacy. Instead of exercising our wits profanely, in contriving from what she may be excluded, and by what means her influence may be curtailed; it should rather be consulted, how speedy and perfect a restoration of her abased prerogatives may be yielded her. Hitherto, our religious revival has failed to bear her up to this position. It has partaken of much of the utilitarian character of our times. It has grown to no palmy height, nor covered the land with its shadow; though its fruit has been both abundant and precious. It does not seem to have been born for longevity, by drawing to, and incorporating with itself, the whole soul of the nation. It wants the apostolic admeasurement of "length, and depth, and breadth, and height,"—the thorough indoctrination, (which our northern neighbours have kept up,) of a whole kingdom in orthodoxy,—which so strongly holds a nation to its principles, though its spiritual life may greatly fluctuate; and supplies the preliminaries of appeal to men of every grade, as a deposit of truth, instead of a *carte blanche* for disputation on first principles. It provides an open way of return to piety, when it has been forsaken. It raises an equal

rampart against infidelity and superstition. It gives authority and venerableness to the Christian ministry; and systematically upholds religious influence in society, confining all human sciences and conventional principles within their own proper courses.

We have witnessed the rise an reign of mechanic and scientific truth. Genius and philosophy have blended their glories. To the varieties of artistic skill, have been added all the delicate and beautiful creations of fancy and imagination. Political speculation has been pushed to the uttermost, and issued in a series of bold experiments. Social power, multifariously combined, and perseveringly applied, has given a fresh impetus to the onward movement of the world, and added new provinces to the empire of man. The patronage of all human interests, and the sceptre of society, have been handed over to these earth-born genii; which nevertheless, like idols, are no gods. This eminency over the world is ever usurped, if held by any power but the Truth, which alone, as the law of Christ, the glory of God, and the light of the world, is the Supreme Liege, by unalienable prerogative, demanding the heart and homage of universal man.

The second desideratum in the religion of the age, is a UNITED AND CATHOLIC ASPECT OF THE CHURCH, equally remote from the domination of one party, and the factions of the many. A more profound and steady view of New-Testament principles is required, with less of the selfishness which never fails to generate bigotry, and to promote party interests, at the expense of the general good. In proportion as it multiplies centres of attractive force, its repulsive efficacy represents the aggregate result of this pernicious combination. The fair and faultless image of catholic Christianity, is diversely caricatured by each of these party copyists; who, in their exclusive regard to one feature, limb, or member of the body, lose sight of the heavenly symmetry of the whole, and are in danger of deifying an

image of the fancy, and of demanding homage for an idol, instead of setting forth the full likeness of the Saviour.

When doubtful disputations prevail, in the place of broad, evangelical verities, and *opinions* are made the tests of orthodoxy, and the laws of fellowship, men learn to break, without remorse, the apostolic rule,—to "receive one another," as Jesus Christ has received them, to the glory of his Father. Mutual jealousies and proscriptions follow, and a Popish infallibility, with all its train of mischiefs, is the Antichrist enthroned within every section of the Church. The Protestant basis of the Church, the sole rule of faith and living,—THE BIBLE, AND THE BIBLE ONLY,—is superseded by traditionary dogmas, by priestly assumptions, by the prejudices of education, of caste, and various other social accidents. An ecclesiastical regime is magnified as of apostolic origin; the fable of ministerial pedigree, and of sacramental virtue, as bound up with it, are the substitutes for the "one faith" which saves. Or else differences of theological findings in the record, consistent nevertheless with soundness in fundamentals; or views of the ordinances, or of modes of public worship, or of Church discipline and order, or of the state, or anti-state relations of the Church;—such matters of opinion, whether more or less important of themselves, or approximate to truth, are made to traverse the great GOSPEL RULES by which discipleship itself is created; and which comprise all the ordinances of practical perfection, as well as of spiritual life. Thus Christians defraud themselves of their birthright and blessing together. "The unity of the Spirit" is broken; the "new commandment" dishonoured; the grand badge of Christianity, before the eyes of the world, obliterated. Religion is degraded into a mode of profession—a rallying point for the passions—the watchword of a party. It is encumbered with a load of unnatural appendages, or disfigured with technical distinctions. The authority of its testimony is weakened, and the evidence of its divinity

obscured, by this haze of human passions. No interest is felt in the affairs of other communities. The middle wall is reared so high, that all which it encloses is rendered invisible and alien, if not hated. The fear of encroachments, and the enthusiasm of rivalry, are the chief impellents to activity; and more alarm is felt lest a name should wane, or a sect expire, than lest Christ's whole interest in the world should be in jeopardy.

Religion, in our day, needs a more compact front,—a more spiritual character, and unfettered action upon society. If the integrity of the various denominations which share the religion of our country, be a necessary provision for its maintenance and spread, it must not be forgotten, that "the unity of the Spirit" is of *antecedent obligation* to every economy simply human, however useful. There is, at least, a grand apostolic federalism, running on through all ages and all countries, where Christianity has gained a footing, which is of the very essence of its church economy, and inseparable from the dispensation of "all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ."* This *oneness* with which it started in its career of evangelization, this inspired protest against the monopolizing spirit of Judaism, it repeats wherever it comes. It knows "no man after the flesh;" that is, after the distinctions suggested by our earthly nature, which ever war against the holy rules of heaven, in sacred things. The "man in Christ" is the only object of evangelical recognition and glorying. Its ordinances are all given with a view to his birth, growth, and perfection. This is the basis of its doctrine of union, and of all its provisions for bringing peace to the Church, and salvation to the world.

The grand spectacle to be offered to the world of unbelieving men, is that of "ONE FAITH," held by multi-

* A precious section of the temple of truth, which, as rescued from the Vandalism of religious factions, has been gloriously exhibited by the Evangelical Alliance.

tudes, having no other bond of affinity; but exhibiting every possible characteristic difference besides. It is truth, recognised and adored as the heavenly gift,—not by prescription or force, but by the consent of minds perfectly free,—and discreetly exercising reason, by the rules pertinent to conviction,—minds, also, evincing the strength of their persuasion, by refusing to put any things besides fundamentals, even though true, into co-ordination with them, because of their *lesser value*, as well as of their *lesser evidence;* minds too loving to be selfish; too much trained to high and ample vision to be microscopically fault-finding; too wise to be duped into the belief that "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," is as appropriate an inscription for the portal of a church, as it is as a form of juridical imposition; or that, within its own shrine and temple, *all* the precious things of redemption are lodged, and refuse only possessed by every other.

Churches with their respective peculiarities, may coexist in the same country, on the common foundation of the New Testament; just as, in different countries, they maintain a separate and independent existence: but their federalism must be unbroken, their charity regnant, and their behaviour to each other must imply much more than *mere tolerance.* No one-sided demand of concession must be arrogated; no claims set up which cannot be admitted without inflicting a painful consciousness of humiliation. If "the unity of the Spirit" be kept, it must be within "the bond of peace." War of words and deeds must cease; and the supercilious temper be abandoned, which, under the kindly appellation of *brother,* is so officious in pulling out the mote from his eye, careless how far it may give pain, or wound so delicate an organ, rather than restore to it the power of perfect vision. Such hypocrisy must hear the Master's rebuke,—"Behold a beam is in thine own eye!"

The self-scrutiny, so peremptorily required by the Lord

himself, as the only cure for a censoriously reforming temper, in respect to a brother, is equally applicable to the conduct of RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES towards each other. Mutual correction is one of the most precious offices of love —the surest test of the existence of a real brotherhood. It is fraternal love only, which can undertake so delicate a task; and it is the same spirit, which, reciprocating good-will, will open and subject so delicate an organ as the eye to be handled by another. To give sound vision to the Church, the action must be *mutual*, and *alternate*. The light must be carried into each other's communities. Candour must be separated from rudeness, and censure from asperity. Examinations must be conducted with no view to exposure; and weakness revealed, without fear of party triumph.

Religious difference, or even eccentricities, may be left to the action of a catholic love; as glaciers, which defy any other power, than the sun of the advancing year, to dissolve them; or as the rugged peaks, which scorn the power of man, but overhang many a fruitful glen, and furnish many a river-head, which scatters the wealth of commerce and the field, over districts thickly peopled. *Unity* we need; *uniformity* we do not need. In a free country, like England, densely populated, variously classified, with mind variously conditioned, and tastes as various as pursuits, *one form of religion only could not obtain; one only could not suffice.* Nature's own unity goes out in diversity; nor ought religion to be ridiculed, and contemned, save by fools, for the same tendencies. Let this identity be at once owned, and heartily seconded; leaving it to time, to the progress of society, and, above all, to the increase of piety, to modify its action, or to correct its excesses: but, let no party frown it away.

The free, but irregular, action of the English mind, has reared the noblest fabric of constitutional government, of laws and jurisprudence, of social elevation and national

greatness, the world has ever seen; and, it would be strangely anomalous, if its religious freedom, in its results, could be disparaging to its secular achievements. It is our *fault,* religiously, if our distinctions effectuate separations, and our independence breed animosities; if we set our *opinions,* and our *faith,* in opposition to each other; if we make our differences greater than our agreements—our churches to annul our brotherhood—or our sects of more importance than our Christianity itself. Revealed religion must demand, as it includes, the exhibition of truly catholic principles, and a catholic spirit in its professors. This lies at the very root of all healthy and permanent reaction in the religion of the country, as distinguished from what is merely local and sectional. If the Church ever forsake one great cardinal truth, in her vicissitudes through time, its absence will make itself felt, in derangement, feebleness, and decay; just as if some one element in nature were subtracted or inert. No *party* church is catholic in principle; or can become so, in absolute territorial possession. Its star (whatever it may be in local lustre) is not that of "the morning;" and it will certainly have disappeared, long before the sunrise of millennial Christianity over the world.

Efficient Christianity implies, also, the prevalence of an AGGRESSIVE spirit in the Church—to which, in fact, the Church owes its origin—as it is of the very essence of apostolical Christianity, and the creative power of every subsequent epoch of its prosperity. All experience, and the reason of the case, prove, that nothing but *zeal* can act upon the world. Nor is it without designed emphasis, on this point, that prophecy itself, represents the final subjugation of the world to Christ, as the most signal triumph of omnipotent love: "The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this." What the Divine zeal is, we learn from the history of the God-Man, who is both the Fountain and the Model of it, to His people. In Him, we clearly discern the

perfect presence of *one object*, and the perfect consecration of life, with every iota of its influence, to its prosecution and attainment. In Him it was—though infinitely more glorious—the single eye, which He so exalts as the very soul of discipleship; and which made His whole nature and career, in His human capacity, so "full of light." His *work* could not be earthly, whose *mind* was in opposition to every character of mere manhood. His aim was beyond and above everything that human eye can admeasure, or human reason entertain; whose whole being was so strangely singular, as to set Him in isolation from all his fellows,—moved when they were indifferent; untouched by the whole sphere of their activities and sympathies; sad, even to weeping, when they were most exultant; rent by agony, and bathed in sweat of blood, when even his disciples were locked in peaceful slumbers,—"Who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame," says an apostle. These were means to the end, and the expressions of its value. The Lord's joy is his work,—the joy of salvation,—the joy which expounded His zeal, combined every power of His nature, and ruled the whole course of His action and passion.

But all thus done, *was elementary and provisional only*. Justice was propitiated, the Spirit given, and the foundations were laid of a new dominion over men; as "the beams of His chambers in the waters," not to "be removed forever." These ordinances were to go forth, potent as those of creation; and new men were to be called into being, to speak them through the world, and to register them on the face of society, as the fiats of omnipotent love. Henceforth, man could bear but one aspect to his fellow, thus illumined and sanctified by grace. All his physical and mundane relations gave place to views of his religious condition—hopeful, because he is redeemed; in danger extreme, because he is depraved. The atonement, interlaying all his relations to the Deity, and itself the moral ground of human

existence, renders universal personal recovery an ascertained possibility. It forms the ground of appeal to men in general, and of church extension throughout all nations. These proceed on the assumption, that the amnesty, or reconciliation, of the cross, includes every man; and that all its related and consummatory, but conditional blessings, belong to him, though it should happen that the *tidings* of redemption never reach his ears. Hence, the duty of the Church is correlative with the work of Christ. It springs out of it; is enforced by it; and terminates in it. If Christ has *claims* upon all men, then all men have *interests* in Him; and to declare the one, and to enforce the other, is the scope of all church counsel and endeavour.

The progress of such a work demands a spiritual energy, and unity of effort, truly primitive; proportioned to its surpassing majesty, and the impediments to its consummation. In eternal opposition to the course of the world, it possesses no auxiliaries in it, as it holds no purchase on the wide-spread masses of fallen mind around it; abundant in resources for its destruction, they form the very "power of darkness," and throne of the wicked one. Nor does it seem possible, that the two great societies that embody the principles of good and evil should be ever *neutral* toward each other; or cease to be alternately recipient of each other's influences. For, be it remembered, that the same stock of humanity is inherent in them both. They hold not dominion in several worlds, nor in diverse orders of being, but are territorially and essentially one; and if it be the design of heaven, in this ordination of their positions, to afford scope for moral action of extreme diversity, and to give to good a final supremacy over evil, it is obvious that such a result as this cannot come of mutual tolerance, or a sleepy truce, (were this possible,) but from collision, in which the resources of each party shall be tested to the uttermost.

This argument is verified by a view of the religious divisions of the world, particularly of those included in Chris-

tendom. The cessation of a shaking and unsparing belligerency, by which these divisions were drawn around, and, in some instances, *through* kingdoms, left them substantially with the same relative dimensions as abide to this day, and which, without the action of some new disturbing force, promise to remain for as many centuries to come. Their very neighbourhood, and long familiarity to each other, render them less prone to mutual aggressions; while error, by this position of the parties, gains, in the same proportion as truth loses, by the ability of its antagonist to maintain itself, and to make good its claims to popular veneration. The same remark holds, with respect to the influences which spiritual religion and formalism exert upon each other; or the corruptions of society upon the Church, which can only repel the contagion that surrounds her, by keeping up a brisk action at every point, and fearlessly invading the seat of the mischief. Here, a drawn battle is a disastrous defeat; and a refusal to return to the contest, the precursor of ignominious subjection to the foe. Churches are ever in danger of seeking repose, as did Israel, before the land was thoroughly subdued; leaving, in the remnants of its hostile population, the roots of bitterness which sprang up to trouble them, threatening their existence, as well as depriving them of their sovereignty. Churches are too apt to draw their respective boundaries, and imagine these to be, what the British Islands once were to the Romans, the Ultima Thule. They are too sensible of difficulties, too little buoyant in their temper, and of too little faith. If their existence, or their liberties, be not perilled, they are little concerned for their extension. They sink into a *conservative* temper; trusting to their previous acquisitions, and glorying in their spiritual ancestry, their organization, theology, public status, and the shield of the commonwealth, for safety, rather than in the blessing of God on a faithful adherence to principles.

The course of this degeneracy is marked by a greater re-

gard toward party principles, and party objects, than toward the great work of religion, as such; by a fastidious sensibility to public opinion, as for or against the measures it may adopt; by a recoil from persecution, however mild; by the adoption of merely secondary means for supporting itself against the current of the times, or the wastes and accidents of life; by such an over-estimate of system and order as tends to *repress,* not simply to *direct,* exertions to their spiritual results; by refraining from doing good from fear of an accidental evil; and, above these, by the loss of that simple, all-devouring zeal, which is ever most powerful, because most naturally adapted, to produce great effects.

Earnestness of spirit, itself the offspring of a deep conviction, and of a divine philanthropy, carries truth to the very eye, and persuasion to the heart; heroically bold, and strong in faith; powerful, even when engaged for error—how much more, when pleading for truth? It is "the armour of light," rendering the church as impervious to force, as triumphant over its foes; gleaming in glory more than the shields of fabled demigods; and hurling defeat on the legions of darkness, with the arms which His mind supplies, who "suffered for us in the flesh."

The true power of the church over the world consists in the possession of the mind of Christ; which, holding the combination of every virtue, is governed by the wisdom of one idea,—that the design of an earthly life is to enlighten and save the world; that this is its great warfare—its one business; and that individual disciples, and churches, exist for the same end,—both are ministries of redemption, agencies created by the cross, and witnesses for God. This power is the moral character of Christ, copied out by his his disciples, and held up before the eyes of men, by every generation of his spiritual seed. It is the Gospel personified, and faith embodied, which never fails to overcome the world, and to execute judgment upon its gods.

It demands no conditions for success, extraneous to the

soul of the Church, or that of the individual believer. It quails before no array of adversaries—it defies every league of evil. Though but as a grain of mustard-seed before the huge mountain, it drowns it in the sea, or grinds it into dust. It goes forth in the name of the Lord, single-handed; as David against the Philistine, whose armour, sword, and spear, were of no avail against the smooth stones of the brook, and the sling, which, wielded by more than mortal hand, carried death into the champion's forehead. Or, it is as Gideon, whose victory over Midian, with lamps, pitchers, and trumpets,—not with deadly weapons,—was divinely represented by the falling of a barley-cake into the encampment, overturning the tents as it rolled; while the hand remained *unseen* that cast it, and armed it with so miraculous a force. To this power, of which man is the representative, and the vehicle, no counter resources are equivalent: it is made "perfect in weakness," so far as its instruments are concerned; and, on the other hand, in the magnitude of the forces it overthrows. It was never worsted in its encounters with the world. The history of its revelations, and the monuments of its power, attest this, irrefragably, and forever. It relies not on the number, nor the resources of its champions, for its triumphs; but simply on their spirit. These, in every instance, have been few and select. The leading minds, in its most signal movements, have been as devoid of policy, as they were charged with zeal—without the least tincture of worldly providency, though even prophetic in the anticipations of their faith. They watched not for opportunities, or for a felicitous conjunction of circumstances, to insure effects—they were prompt to duty, and fearless of the issue. They moved the world, because God moved them. They were simply conductors of His power; and were as lost to themselves, in their most glorious careers of service, as are the mightiest agencies in the economy of nature.

The spirit that wrought changes so divinely beneficent in

large portions of the world, is strikingly set forth in the words of its most illustrious example—"none of us liveth unto himself, and none of us dieth unto himself." Further, it may be remarked, that the degree in which this spirit pervades churches, is the true index of their position and prospects. They *must* live and prosper, if their primitive temper be cherished, as the fire which fell from heaven. The house is not forsaken, if this be not extinguished; and that which is "the glory in the midst," is also a wall of defence round about it. For this there is no substitute in the more auspicious circumstances of any Christian community. These may hide its nakedness, but cannot arrest its decline. The course of its vital current is traced in the rise and fall of its aggressive power: the sequel is but the progress of old age, decline, and death. Nor does it historically appear, that churches, when once passed the age of their working power, and zenith of their glory, have ever recalled these epochs in their prosperity; any more than the seasons of life are redintegrated. They become as bodies when life is fled, decomposed; or, if they remain, it is by human art, such as the Egyptians practised, who embalmed their *dead*, but were unable to restore them to life. The departed spirit of religion re-appears in other forms, in other lands, or in another age. It rears new shrines for itself among other people. The Jew is abandoned, and the Gentile chosen in his stead. The centres of Christian life and power are transferred to other parts; just as those of civilization and empire have moved from the East to the West. If the vessel which should have been unto honour, is marred; another is formed out of the same general mass, more suited to display the riches of grace. If one instrument become broken, or blunted, by which Christ would carry on his work, and secure his renown, another can be tempered by Him who says, "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals, and I have created the waster to destroy."

No Churches can claim irrevocable charters from heaven, nor individual pledges of perpetuity; and we have read the Epistle to the Romans without understanding, if we have failed to perceive that the doctrine of election and reprobation, therein set forth, belongs rather to the broader matter of a Church covenant, than to individual salvation; and, that it is intended to point out, not merely to the age and people immediately concerned in the argument, but to all generations, the principles on which a *Church tenure* is founded, and on which God himself will try all claims to it. The Churches of our day need a mighty reinforcement, of what, in the evangelical sense, may be termed, VIRTUE—that beginning of strength which the firstborn inherits; and without which, religion, with all its institutional mechanism, and normal action, droops, as if its life were all but spent, and it could not long maintain its old position, much less take one in advance. It would seem that the extent of the field we have entered, which is in fact the world, chiefly served to reveal the poverty of our resources, and (humanly considered) the presumption of our adventure. We are constantly embarrassed by a felt disproportion, in means and ability, with our end; and by the fact, that our action has waxed feeble, as the scale of our operations has increased. This argues an artificial character in our plans and agencies—deceptive by their imposingness, and entertaining us with images of progress and greatness, which have no correspondence with fact. Our dwarfish stature, and gigantic undertakings, have stood in striking contrast with each other; while our duties and our virtues have had their disparity detected, by the number of appliances found necessary to compel the latter into action; the former, like the stone of Sisyphus, constantly rolling back upon us. If the law of physical proportions hold any place in the *moral* system, the fact just glanced at is in evidence, that the Church is greatly behind the wants of the age, and the business of her calling. There are wheels of great span,

and of complex action,—there is system on a vast scale,—there is heard the loud rumble of its motions, and the noise as of an attendant host; but there is the want of "the Spirit in the wheels." Mere institutions, however well conceived, and systems however worked, will never supply the place of individual influence in society. They do little more than glance over its surface, or touch it at certain points. They do not enter into its substance, and penetrate through its depths—thus realizing the striking representation of Church influence by the Master, in the salt, which pervades the entire mass with its own properties. As in nature, forms are nothing without life, and in the human world, mechanism is nothing without power; so in the Church, systems and institutions are nothing without a certain spiritual force. The real power of the Church is, self-impellency; the deep flowing in, and flowing out, of a Divine life,—through the channels of personal existence, as well as companies of men. All influences created by mere pressure from without—all operations compelled by mere excitement, are as ephemeral, as they are unnatural; the spark expires with the stroke that kindled it, unless it alight on a substance proper to receive, and to feed its life; then it will burn and expand, till it has careered over the world. Religion dies in like manner, unless it seize on the whole substance of our nature: then it spreads and towers, as it finds aliment in the accumulation of congenial mind, till the world flames like one vast altar, on which all nations are offered up by Christ unto His Father; else a momentary gleam upon the world's darkness, becomes but the signal of its re-absorption into its source, and of abandonment, involving, perhaps, the destinies of generations, in the postponement of the world's jubilee.

This is not the responsibility of churches merely,—it belongs to individuals; as the Church itself is but an aggregate of persons, and the representative of their characters and influences. The parable of the talents lays down the

duties of individuals, not the obligations of societies. The negative would, in this instance, for practical ends, be as unsound in philosophy, as false in divinity. It is a fiction, under which lurks many a form of Antinomianism, and which many an indolent and useless professor doats upon, (as Romanists do, on the merits of their saints,) and converts into a scape-goat, to bear away his sins. This is a specious, and, it is to be feared, a prevailing delusion, by which moral individuality is lost; just as Hindooism teaches that the soul is finally lost by absorption into the Deity. The man's habit of thought and feeling becomes purely relative—quite alien to all that is personal. He regards the Church, the system, the body to which he belongs, and its action, or no-action, with alternate complacency, or censure; without ever pondering his personal responsibilities, or inquiring how large a degree of its success, or its failure, is due to himself. In the material system of our world, various elements, and manifold substances, are wisely combined, and are made the necessary conditions of the several gradations of creatures: but it is not so in the Church. This is no combination of heterogeneous substances. It admits and demands one thing only, and this is LIFE; and nothing, in which is not found the breath of life—the nature of the second Adam—the creation of the Holy Ghost—has any lot in this inheritance. And this life is to be trained, and habituated, to its own proper casts of agency, just as our common nature is to its different spheres of worldly activity. The accumulation of the *dead* in this "land of the living," can only hinder action, and generate disease. Mere numbers are the array of weakness, not of strength. They are to living Christians, what idols are to the living God. "They have eyes," says the Psalmist, "but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not; neither speak they through their throat;" and like these, though impotent to bless, they are not harmless in their curse. The barely negative posi-

tion of professors, at which these remarks are chiefly aimed, puts an effectual check to the progress of religion in the world. It does not come up to even the Laodiceanism, which our Lord so severely reprobates. It is rather that of which the Church in Sardis was the type. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

By too many, the church state has been entered without adequate preparation, either as to learning or conviction. Superficial tastes, and occasional desires, have ceased in torpor and settled apathy. They were, in fact, in a more hopeful state, as they were in a more appropriate location, *without* the Church, than *within* it. Their church status has administered an opiate, not a vital stimulant to their spirits. They are in a worse case than the man born blind, for they are born *dead*—mere faded leaves—withered blossoms—fruit nipped by the wind, or eaten by the caterpillar. The Church does nothing for such a class of professors, but what God does to every disobedient man: it blinds their eyes, closes their ears, and hardens their hearts. "Their table," like that of reprobates, becomes "a snare." The provisions of grace serve only to nourish their corruptions. They are, as Israel was, polluted in their own gifts; and are become too familiar with the truths, privileges, people, and even language of religion, to come under the impressions of its divine excellency; as when, for the first time, it is approached from the world. Even in another class than this, the great rule and end of discipleship, are but feebly apprehended, and too desultorily pursued. Too much is left to system, and to office in the Church; too much selfishness displayed in the very use of spiritual advantages. Duties are too commonly lost sight of in the conventialism that issues from economic relations, which seem required to do what government, in certain countries, is expected to perform,—viz., to secure national prosperity, and to diffuse universal competency, without the diligent concurrence of its subjects.

CHAPTER VII.

CHURCH PROVISION.

* * "Even in this age, there are dark corners in this kingdom, where profaneness lives quietly with invincible ignorance."—FULLER.

"The vain and malignant spirit which had decried the elevated piety of the Puritans, sought about for some convenient form in which it might again come forth to hiss at zealous Christianity; and in another lucky moment fell on the term *Methodist*."—JOHN FOSTER.

REVIVAL includes the adequate extension of church agencies and provisions. In our day, as perhaps always, the platform of religion has gone out into society far beyond the real domain of religion itself; yet, on the other hand, it is important to note, that religion never travels beyond the dimensions of that platform. Often the institutional provisions of religion may be found almost alone; but, like John the Baptist, they do a mighty work, if they merely "prepare the way of the Lord." If not in every case, like the breaking of a shell, or the offcasting of an earlier exuviæ—the sign of expanding life, they are, at least, signals of advance, and of purposed subjugation. If religion were to be judged of chiefly by its external, and economic progress in our land, (though countersigns are not lacking,) its attitude, upon the whole, might be judged not a little heart-reviving. Undoubtedly, some spirit has gone over the land, retouching the old monuments of religious dominion, and rearing many more.

Material extension is as necessary to the maintenance of spiritual health in the Church, as it is agreeable to the nature, claims, and public designs of Christianity itself. Its popular sovereignty, and its ultimate nationality, flow from what may be appropriately termed its *characteristic humanity*. It is not the religion of caste, or of cultivation; of state administration, civic patronage, or social accidents:

it is essentially the religion of man; and exhibits no preferences, but such as add powerful commendation to this its wisdom and love. *Extension* is, therefore, a leading feature of Christianity. It must be free in action—its own nature is freedom—it demands what it gives. Its *spirit* was as forcibly declared as its destiny, in the memorable words of the great commission:—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It is impartial, because philanthropic; it is plenary, because pre-eminently human. It is the sole purifier of nations: it is vital to the well-being of society; nor can human combination and action ever rise to perfection, without its all-controlling presence. This it brings to pass by the redundancy of its own native influence, separated from all properties not of itself; and by the divinity inherent in it, which, issuing from its own chosen channels, and functions, secures its social triumphs by the sublime but simple process of individual appropriation. In order to this, it must be made instrumentally effective, and organically pervading. It must go forth, according to the bidding which gave it existence and empire, to its work of teaching; compelling and converting, by all such appliances as a discreet zeal can devise, simple, authoritative, determined, laborious, spiritually and practically emulative; in constancy as in power, like the atmosphere, or the light.

True evangelism is not more akin to mysticism, than it is to a proud Phariseeism, or a lazy Antinomianism. It is human wisdom, as it is applied to the whole business of life; but with an inspiration which makes it superhuman in its temper, tendency, and end. It does not "reap" where it has "not sown." It is as servant-like as it is royal—equally laborious and sublime—a perfect practical philosophy. It studies how to reach men, casting its whole energy into the work of converting them. Evangelism is enterprise. It cannot be a mere stationary, self-conserving thing. It must progress, or deteriorate. Its power wanes,

if limited to the circle of past occupation. Its ordinances and influences sensibly decline in their results, when no fresh ground is taken, and no experiments are made upon minds hitherto beyond its sphere of operation. They become mutually exhausting: the ministry has put forth its strength, and the several effects of it are all but stereotyped in the grades of moral condition surrounding it. It has, perhaps, almost perfected its analysis of that particular portion of humanity; and left it almost as the great Heart-Searcher and Judge will find it—the fire of whose furnace, in Jerusalem, has already separated the gold from the dross, leaving to the last day, as distinguished from the present, the office simply of *declaring* what now exists.

This merely stationary, and endlessly repeated, action of the Church upon particular sections of society, is a serious bar to its success; and it must be removed by an effort toward indefinite amplification. The circle of its operations must be always widening: much of its action must be experimental; founded not merely on a conviction of duty, and of conformity with apostolic, and in fact, with all primitive example; but on a wise regard to the varieties of spiritual condition, through which the same masses pass, ere their great probation is ended; and, to the *times* and *seasons*, which, though unknown in some respects to men, are all ordained in wisdom and mercy, to give effect to the plans and endeavours of the Church.

Some grievous fault must be chargeable on the Church, if, after centuries of existence and public recognition, in any country, it has failed to bear a universal testimony for Christ among its people, however numerous or depraved. To make itself heard everywhere—as the voice of a herald, or crier—is the true notion of an evangelical ministry; or to sound it forth as the blasts of a trumpet, filling a whole region equally, and at once, which is the illustration of his own missionary ministry given by St. Paul: "From Jerusalem, round about even unto Illyricum,

I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." As nothing is clearer, than that it is the will of Christ that His gospel should be preached "to every creature," so that they may become instructed in all the doctrines and duties of discipleship, this event can be no impossibility. That it should be an *actual event*, at any one assignable time, may be so: but the law obliging to endeavour, implies that, ultimately, such a point will be reached; and that it may be hastened or delayed, just as neglect or diligence, marks the conduct of the Church, as the chartered executive of His law. In particular localities, the task is more direct, and definite; certainly not demanding age upon age for its accomplishment, beyond that of the introduction and establishment of religion in a land.

The footsteps of evangelism may surely keep pace with those of civilization anywhere. They may assuredly outstrip it—if they can, in some instances, even anticipate, or create it. Now history and fact testify, that no indefinite duration must elapse, ere civilization can pervade a tribe, or continent of people. A rapidly multiplying population may increase the difficulty of carrying on the evangelizing process, in such a country as our own: but this only occurs, when some long and criminal default in duty has told up in mountainous arrears; binding upon posterity a national debt, far more enormous and ruinous than that which wars, or reckless extravagance, or the necessary costliness of government, may have entailed upon a land. Would, too, that there were less prospect of further accumulation, and more of liquidation, in the one case than the other!—that the Church, to whom it appertains, so felt her burden, as earnestly to set to work for its reduction! —having resources at her command, which, if faithfully applied, are not so disproportionate to this end as might be supposed. This, if accomplished, would make her prosperous, free, and happy, beyond what we, or our fathers, have known; and would render our efforts for the world's

conversion as telling as they are now feeble; the redundancy of our wealth, rather than exactions from our poverty; our glory, as a NATIONAL expression of faith and zeal, not our reproach, as now, when religion goes abroad in the earth with a stigma of neglect upon her, by her own home-bred children—weakened, both in the authority of her testimony, and the extent of her resources, as being but the represensative of a few, instead of the embassy of an empire, more zealous and powerful to enforce its faith, than to belt itself with colonies, or, by its commerce, wealth, and energy, to gather from the world a homage to its name. Hence, evangelization, as it is made our first duty, so is its progress the only genuine augmentation of church ability to grapple with the more distant, and weightier task, of converting the world. It is also the test of our sincerity, as well as a training school for enterprise. The difficulties which surround it,—the qualities it demands in the agencies relating to it,—the philanthropy, prayer, and sacrifice, which the Church must foster, in order to maintain the struggle with her *neighbour* adversaries,—are the pre-requisites for her more catholic calling. To voluntary, as they are professedly, spiritual churches, the spirit, and the monuments of home extension, are the only securities for *their* existence, or, at least, for the maintenance of public consideration. The bias of education, family compact and its advantages; the hereditary affinities that religion has created; the force of sectarian peculiarities, and of secondary principles,—these, if they save from extinction, can never secure ascendency: the power of the religious element can alone do this.

To Methodism this is indispensable. Hated from its birth, and cradled in persecution,—uncongenial with existing sects, and scorned by the wealth and rank of the land,—its origin and hold are exclusively popular. It impersonates no political creed, as it drew its life from no civil or ecclesiastical convulsions. It finds no abutments

of support in records, or traditions, which link its being with some great national events, or crisis of our public fortunes. It finds no sympathy in the religious predilections of the land. It has hewn no pillars for itself in its religious history, in the form of venerable institutions, wealthy endowments, or literary chieftaincy. It has no purveyancy for its maintenance which is not purely religious; nothing accidental or secondary belonging to it, by which to impact itself into society, and interweave its existence with the very heart of the nation. To this hour, like Israel of old, it abides alone, simply as a form of modern evangelism, sustained by the unaided energy of the religious principle; and exhibiting no more affinity with the sundry ecclesiastical regimes around it, or the genius of the English mind, than the mistletoe with the oak, or the apple-tree, from whose sap and stems it draws its life.

Methodism is, characteristically, expansion; its progress having been more rapid, and extensive, than that of any other form of revived Christianity, in modern times. Its seed has been scattered almost over the face of the whole earth, reproducing its primitive plant, and primitive fruit, "a hundred-fold." Its final fortunes are also inherent in the principles of its outset, and existing dominion, whether at home or abroad. It is impossible that a system so devoid of alliances, and subsidiary influences, can ever maintain itself by shifting its position, or taking lower ground. Its *religion* is everything; its secondary supports, nothing. In this, its sole and absolute dependence on the spiritual principle for dominion, it may adopt the language of Constantine's vision, "with this, conquer."

To a pure and catholic doctrine, it joins a popular ministry, and a well-organized subsidiary agency—a spiritual discipline, with church offices; which, as they were original embodiments of the heavenly life, are admirably adapted to sustain and perfect it. Its forms are so simple, its operations so flexible, its end so direct,—to spread Scrip-

tural holiness throughout the land,—that its duties and interests are inseparable,—equally impressed upon its character, history, and position. Its work is as definitely set forth in the present religious destitution of the English populace, as it was in the moment of its birth. It is, if it be yet METHODISM, a most vigorous elementary species of Christianity,—its essence concentrated, without the more elaborate and imposing adjuncts of system and circumstance, such as time and nationality might cast around it. It must still be elementarily powerful, and ceaselessly diffusive; *modified* indeed by the times that pass over it, but never changed, either rudimentally or practically. All its systematic, or operative additaments, must be plastic as its life, obeisant to its genius, as the body to the indwelling spirit. It can never give expression to the refinements of caste, or yield idolatrous worship to wealth and station. It is no organ of class sentiments and sympathies, as distinct from those of humanity in general. Its ambition is not, in the most refined degree, or remote sense, secular. It has no *secondary* objects, as it has no double vision. Its voice is simply to the *souls* of men; its field of enterprise, the masses, everywhere yet bearing the stamp of an unreclaimed and unappropriated moral waste. The higher classes, wholly, and even the middle classes, partially, of England's people, are, either by prescription, interest, or preference, beyond its pale.

Social organization, so strongly graduated as ours, implies a corresponding variety of religious externalism; and will, to a certain extent, bring it to pass, that the superior classes will determine their religious category for themselves. The religion, however, of the *working man*, will ever tend to overstep its appropriate bounds, and to throw off, from its fecundity, a powerful element for the general weal. As it becomes rife among the people whom it is its commission to disciple, it will mount upward, and blend with the heights of the social region. It will follow the

great laws of generalization, by which good and evil alike hold their sway.

Hence the points of weakness and strength, as they appertain to Methodism, lie in the opposite extremes of its social posture. Its *strength* lies in its creative power on the mass,—its *weakness*, in the attractive force of class contiguity, on the ascending side of the scale. These contiguities will generate affinities; and a large waste of Church element and resource will result. Church health and growth follow the law of our bodily nature, supply answering to waste; or the ledger of the merchant, noting both expenditure and receipt, loss and gain. Methodism is a working Church, grounded on the inspired maxim—"In all labour there is profit." Its only boon is salvation—its only merchandise, souls. This bears glory to it, as to the Church of prophecy, in a flowing stream. It is to her the wealth of the nations, brought within her gates, which, as those of the New Jerusalem, should be never shut, night nor day. The exhaustion of this traffic must needs be its ruin; its prosperity, the pledge of safety and renown. In addition to the fondest instincts of her children cleaving to her, as Ruth did to Naomi, Methodism requires large reinforcement from without; its conservative power being chiefly derived from its ever-unfolding energy—its restless, hungry appetency, which roams over sea and land to make proselytes; but in no lower sense than He who endeavoured "to make all men see the fellowship of the mystery."

Methodism cannot be refunded by merely indigenous production, by family influences, by early prepossessions, or by set, institutional agency. Its working animus must not be down to par; the standard taken, being the general religious tone of the age. It requires a higher pitch—the simultaneous action of all its people—the full kingdom of heaven in their souls. If these conditions be not present, its vantage ground is lost—its leverage on society, extinct.

A mere *average* of religious feeling and power, cannot save it from decline. If it has nothing to offer beyond its contemporaries, in the *fulness* of its evangelism, it can hardly compete with them, much less outstrip them in public influence. The only grounds of preference for it disappear; and the less inviting aspects of the system, become prominent to the public eye. When ordinary motives only operate, to choose or refuse allegiance to Methodism, the odds will probably be strongly against it. Sectional differences will be the staple of comparison; relative advantages and disadvantages will be scrupulously balanced; and when the understanding, rather than the heart, becomes umpire in the cause, a hesitating consent, or a cold negative, is a far more probable issue of the trial, than when the strong impulse of religion alone decides it.

Methodism requires that its centres of action should be strengthened, extended, and multiplied. It should be spread over a greater *surface* in the land of its nativity, than hitherto, that it may be able to adopt the language of an early apologist for Christianity, as fairly descriptive of the facts of its own position—"We are but of yesterday, it is true, and yet we have filled all your towns." * * * "The whole world is our republic: we are a body united in one bond of religion, discipline, and hope."

Its condition should not be now, as when its founder, and his immediate successors, like patriarchs, went through the length and breadth of the land, regarding it as an inheritance predestinated for future occupancy,—"when they were but few, and strangers in it." Rather is it the duty of their spiritual seed, to spread themselves abroad everywhere, and to hear the echoes of the prophetic voice, bidding them into possession, as it did the Gentile Church to expand herself, until she had fully encompassed the world: —"Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitation: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes." These terms, taken

from the ancient tabernacle,—itself a striking type of the Christian Church,—beautifully denote a rapidly progressing evangelism, a vast numerical increase, arising from ingatherings from contiguous territory; and a consequent expansion of the visible occupancy of religion in the land. In the midst of various correlated forms of Christian profession, while separate Church interest must be pursued, as a man does the business of his calling, with the full impression that his own interests are his chief concern, the most scrupulous regard must be cherished towards the rights of contemporary communities; and the spirit of party proselytism must be utterly abjured. They are *anti-Christian* propensities, which find indulgence in the mere transfer of persons from one Church to another. It is a *fleshly* vision, which can discern no higher glory in religious effort, than in merely affixing a party-badge upon its disciples. This is a public scandal to religion, wherever it is carried on,—a glorying in the flesh, not in the cross. It compresses all the divine glories of evangelism to the narrow measure, and paltry interests of a *sect.* It is not only an implied declaration of impotency, to grapple with the great task of evangelizing men, but of contempt for it. It exhibits the subtility of Jacob, without the righteousness of his cause, who put the rods into the gutters, when the cattle conceived, making them ring-streaked and speckled; and thus succeeded in transferring Laban's wealth to himself. Nay, more: it is the spirit of seduction and peculation; the very same which defrauded an apostle of the hard-earned fruits of his ministry, and alienated from him multitudes of his children, for whom his soul had travailed within him,—a spirit, which, as it did then, so, to this day, does it track the footsteps of evangelism in every clime; as Satan wended his way to Paradise, and, since then, transformed into an angel of light, "has not ceased to pervert the right ways of the Lord." The two attributes of deception and cruelty, which marked the first temptation, are

identified through all time, as the unvarying type of the agency of the destroyer. It is the wolf in sheep's clothing.

The proper test of an evangelic temper in the Church, is an enthusiastic devotedness to the one great end of the world's redemption; and its ability to prosecute it is the test of its practical worth to society, and a sure prognostic of a triumphant course. Gathering fresh elements of strength from an influx of converted people, it renews church-youth from time to time, "like the eagle's." It lives *in* and *by* the people, striking into the living mass, as leaven into the meal. Its very successes constantly recruit its powers of advance. This Bethesda enlarges its porches, to receive the throng of impotent folk, which never fails to flow into it as a house of mercy, so long as its waters, troubled by the Angel of the Covenant, are found to heal every one that steps in.

Of this high and resistless evangelism, Methodism, in its rise and career, is no mean example; and the utmost power of it, the general condition of society now urgently needs. The contest for the people must not be abandoned, by the only characteristically popular form of Christianity in the land. Mainly, though not exclusively, the evangelization of the *populace* of England, is the appropriate task of Wesley's descendants—himself the prince of home missionaries; and, like Abraham, the father of a multitude of people. To them were addressed most appositely, in the centenary of their existence, the words of the apostle,—"Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and the base things of the world, and things that are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." This section of Scripture, so historically descriptive of the primitive

direction of Christianity through society, is singularly true to the facts of Methodism itself; and is as suggestive of its present policy and prospects. Its vocation as a Church is as much determined by the existing condition of society around it, as by any distinctive principles which belong to it as a form of evangelism. For while we claim on its behalf a general suitability to society, founded on what, at first sight, may seem a disparagement to it—its simplicity, its office certainly is especially popular. It not only deals in the great working truths of Christianity, but pushes these to full and prompt issues. Its most characteristic appeal, if put into Scripture phrase, is, "My son, give me thy heart." Methodism all turns upon this heart-pivot. It grounds itself upon a *known* and *felt* conversion. It can take nothing as satisfying its demand, but a Scripturally ascertained redemption from sin to God. Its discipline and pastoral system are all ranged about this truth, and are intended to give it practical expression.

The peculiar ordinances and usages of Methodism cannot be transferred to any other system. Its sentiment, language, and practical type, are together but its theology in its all-plastic action. If it requires less preparatory work than other systems to form its people, it provides a more careful oversight, and vigorous discipline, to guard and train them in the ways of godliness. Methodism, without professing to be—what no church on earth can be—an exact copy of the primitive, is essentially catholic and apostolic. It is founded exclusively on THE GOSPEL, as the one, and everlasting law of the kingdom of God—the immediate and perfect instrument, as well as testimony, of a saving sovereignty. It looks strongly and steadily upon the declaration, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." It is unspeculative and anti-millenarian: because settled in the assurance, that the existing provisions of redemption are full and sufficient; and that all the differences of church position, and degrees of spiritual

life, which mark off the age of pentecost from those which followed it, or the last days from the present, are not to be imputed to dispensational varieties, but to the sovereignty of one administration, various in its issues, but in perfect correspondence with the moral aspects of the world, and in entire consistency with the doctrine of a universal reign of grace. It is the deep practical belief of this gospel record, —the strong vision of it entertained by spiritual minds,— which supplies the grand moving power to a Scripturally organized Church. This must create an omnipotent action. It does not pause to speculate on results, or to estimate contingencies. It joins itself with every promise made to faith, drawing deeply from these "wells of salvation." It calls into operation the whole store of evangelic motive, influence, and sanction. It is the parent of a truly rational earnestness in religious action, storing up every portion of church gift for vigorous use. It maintains an intense interest among the faithful, in the one great object of church existence. It draws a bond around the whole constituency of spiritual mind, and gives it sympathy and unity of volition inherent in an individual spirit. This originates the *material* of church operation. It is affluent in resources, making riches to abound even in "deep poverty;" and by the width of its enterprise, and the nature of its successes, raises in the mind of the thinking portion of the world, a feeling of astonishment, that men and measures so insignificant could have accomplished such mighty works.

In all epochs of a triumphant gospelling, the olden wonder, raised by the citizens of Nazareth, at the Master's contrasted parentage and performances, has been renewed:— "From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" To do great things, not to vaunt them; to make the fact its own witness, and the prodigy as palpable as the spring of it is mysterious to the eyes of the world,—is a

peculiar trait of the disciples of such a Master. It is alike His honour and His shame reflected from them, through the career of successive centuries, and shared by every church, in proportion to its conformity with the Lord himself. In these aspects, has Methodism reared its head most prominently before the world, as the latest, and most mighty birth of evangelism. Its direct and reflex influence has been indeed prodigious, compelling attention by its progress, yet invested with the same mysterious air to every class of inquirers and judges, as by them all—whether sage, politician, religionist, or infidel—it has been examined and dismissed, with vehement condemnation, or with but rare and doubtful praise. Yet its energy and success have never been questioned; they have rather been exaggerated. Its *name* has been imposed upon religionists, who have repudiated it as a scandal; loathing it, not more because the *world* despised it, than because all parties agreed to stigmatize it, as a sort of illegitimate birth.

In the ascription to Methodism of a spiritual ubiquity, and of a power so fecund, the world has borne to it an honourable testimony, when it intended a bitter sarcasm; as did Pilate, when, in derision, he affixed the real title of Jesus to the cross. The primitive offence of our Church was not less its zeal than its principles. Its annoyance was its obtrusive activity; as was that of the Church of Pentecost, as avowed by the Council to the Apostles, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." Such was the spirit that created Methodism; such only the spirit that can maintain it. Its present vocation is not different from, and certainly not less important than, its primitive one. As, oft, a master mind is demanded to lead on a movement in society, or to begin one; to propose plans, or to perfect discoveries, in the arts or sciences; to exercise kingship in letters, philosophy, or government: so may a church hold analogous prerogatives in respect to other communities, to the religion of an age, or to the general exigencies of the world. Much

of real sovereignty, however disowned, has Methodism exercised over the destinies of churches, kingdoms, and the world at large. Much power has been given it "over the nations;" with the brightness of "the morning star," divinely portending the glories of the coming millenary age.

So far, indeed, from the opinion and the demand being held reasonable, which certain exclusionists have advanced, that Methodism, having accomplished a seasonable and important work for the religion of the country, should now meekly withdraw its claims to public notice, yield up its acquisitions to a chartered ecclesiasm, and, like the blessed dead, rest from its labours; or, so far from a more liberal judgment being counted wise, that, satisfied with an influential position amongst the churches of the age, it should now forego the ruder arts of its first gospelling, and adopt the mere common-places of church system and decorum,—that we hold both these counsels, if followed, would be equally fatal to it, as injurious to the religious interests of the land, as suicidal to itself. The spirit which, in the form of Methodism, awoke the churches from their deadly slumbers, is still required to stimulate their flagging life, and to lead them on in the great warfare; which, so far from being almost finished, after the onslaughts of a century, is scarcely more than begun.

Indebted, beyond all computation, as England is, to the labours and system of Wesley, it can no more afford to lose their benefits, than it can discharge the burden of its obligations. The moral aid it has lent to our social institutions, in the searching ordeal of recent times, is incalculable; and it now holds an office (whether ever fully discharged or not) for the public weal, by its education and evangelizing labours, to prepare us for the future,—possibly more pregnant with hazardous changes than even the past. Wide observation demonstrates, that no religious movement of the present day, nor extension of other moulds of Christian profession, have superseded the public

necessity for Methodism. Were it inoperative, or defunct, what section of the Church is prepared to take its place, or to do its work? Where is the redundant energy contained in the soul of any evangelical community, impatient of restraint? or, where the surplus of resources, whether spiritual or material, by which such a vacuum could be at once replenished, and the image of desolation hidden from our eyes? Abstract its Sunday schools, its village preachings, its rural congregations, and little bands of Christians, scattered everywhere abroad, and how great a part of the light and religion of England is at once extinguished! What sect, besides itself, has carried the gospel into any considerable width of English territory, beyond its townships and more populous districts? No other branch of Nonconformity has thus taken root, and "filled the land." The *breadth* of Methodist operation is the noblest comment on its creed and piety. Nor is it humiliated by a comparison with other, and older communities, in the leading towns, and central districts of the empire; but its *village* labours are its distinctive glory, and its large aggregate of godly poor its greatest treasure.

Such a system, so far from being permitted or desired to wane, should be extended and welcomed. It has, in no period of its history, interfered with the agencies of other systems, or despoiled them of their strength. It has singularly verified and expounded the saying of Christ—"It is more blessed to give, than to receive," inasmuch as it has enriched all, but impoverished none. Like Israel, under the full benediction of the law, it has lent, but not borrowed; much less, *robbed* other churches. From this fact, which challenges controversy, we are entitled to predict, that its far wider spread in Britain, would not only augment the sum of living piety, but would invigorate every evangelical society within its borders. It is to the wide reign of ignorance, vice, and ungodliness, unmolested from age to age, or to the despicable artifices of party recrimination and reprisal,

that religious communities owe their leanness and languishing; not to the widening strides of a simple evangelism, intent only on saving souls. This is a blessing, that a curse; the one blights, the other rains and smiles fertility upon their territories. The one provokes to emulation by brotherly example; the other, exasperates by malicious aspersions, or repels by the scowls of bigotry. A catholic spirit is a zeal which enlightens and refines, without scorching; as the offspring of the gospel, it is not merely innocuous, it is the veriest beneficence of power. It regards means and ends as one consistent manifestation of this same divine principle: less concerned who is the doer, than that the deed be done.

That there should exist such a passion as jealousy, the spirit of political partisanship, or of commercial competition, of secular potentates, intent on superiority over rivals, or the maintenance of the balance of power among each other, where so divine an interest as religion is concerned, is the sorest reproach to human nature; a sin equally against the law of love to God and man. That the world may be neglected,—and, neglected, perish, from the strife of rival sects,—would have been accounted an all but blasphemous imputation, had not stern verity compelled the utterance of it as a fact. Men, of whatever profession, are too prone to act, as though there were other and greater interests to be followed out, than the mere advancement of religion in the world; or as if there were other rights to be withheld, or other masters to be served than Jesus Christ. The assumption of paramount claims and prerogatives, is altogether chimerical, where an appeal lies to the Bible, as a common privilege; and the tactics of check and neutralization, frequently adopted by Christian communities toward each other, is a worse than preposterous strategy for the armies of the cross, insuring defeat, and covering with dishonour.

The extension of religious economy, commensurate with

the wants of society, and its quickened impulse in every direction, are the one present obligation of the Church; without the performance of which, its own interest must needs decay, and society itself bound onwards, only to test the insufficiency of its resources, and the incurableness of its corruptions. History and observation jointly testify, what prophecy sets forth figuratively, when it declares of the tree of life, that its leaf is "for the healing of the nations." This medicine for society must be applied; and if it is perverseness in the world, it is *unbelief* in the Church, to act as if discovery were yet to be tarried for. It is the administration only of what exists, that the moral urgencies of our land call for greater consecration of wealth; greater appropriations of time, and of working energy; a more public spirited and generous nature implanted in the religious mind of the age to meet this all important case of national evangelization. A greatly extended pastorate, and a vigorous lay agency, are indispensable to this work. A *modification* of whatever exists in these departments of church functions is called for; and a fresh spirit should be infused into them, that the task may be renewed with a primitive force. Nothing less than a whole church roused to full action, is demanded by the present crises; a breadth, and a detail of action, which shall comprise, and morally test, the entire mass of our population. The agency of the town and city mission, the labours of the tract distributor, or the occasional visitation of the sick, and homes of destitution, will not suffice. The populace must be thoroughly taught, pervaded, moved, brought out of their deathlike isolation and apathy into congregational unity, into the full influence of the sympathies and bonds of religion. They must be brought to acknowledge the authority of the Sabbath, and to take the impress of church influences. The difficulties and the drudgery of such an undertaking are apparent; but its importance is a commanding plea on its behalf, and the performance of it a sufficient recompense.

The noblest patriots and philanthropists, are the men, of whatever name, who go forth to redeem the English mind from its vassalage to ignorance and evil; pouring into its dark and dismal abyss, a tide of sanitary element from the open bosom of the Church, the mystic temple of prophecy, which was beheld sending forth its streams of living water into the dead sea.

Such is the office of Methodism at this hour. The condition of our country, so often and powerfully described, but never more vividly truthful than in the words of inspiration, as a body covered with "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores," which have not been "bound up, nor mollified with ointment," supplies the tenderest appeals to the mercy of the physician, to the yearnings of the Church, in every form of its existence. The *facts of the case* proclaim the common duty of believers; and nothing beyond these either can or should be added, to compel the most anxious and agonizing efforts for public relief. The mission of Methodism to the poor, has not yet been fulfilled; and it may, far more than any other resource comprehended within our country's limits, yet bear the glory of being its moral renovator. Its simplicity, directness, flexibility, vigour, are qualities of prime importance to a *popular* form of religion; and if, for a season, its course has been arrested, and its labours failed, resignation to such an issue is as small a homage to its history, as it is heroism in a crisis. The labours of extension may become, in certain cases, equally severe with those which originate a movement; but they cannot on that account be declined. A change of position must be shown which warrants the diminution, much less the surceasing of effort. The glorious times of prophecy must have more than verged upon us, when "the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth the seed." There are times familiar to experience, when the conflicts of a great, and hitherto ascendent principle, become so many and mighty, as to threaten it with

arrest and suppression; requiring a new momentum to subsidize it for action, and thus once more to set it at liberty from competing forces. Then, the value of a principle long held, and familiarly recognised, but insensibly depreciated, returns to its former standard and power to actuate us. Errors are detected, of slow and silent growth, in the progress of working a system. The nature and force of social changes, which had escaped attention, are closely scrutinized. The grounds of action are again surveyed, and the position and prospects of a church, estimated in a sober and discrimating, but not in a timid spirit. Existing resources are thankfully acknowledged, and confided in; advantages contrasted with discouragements; the acquisitions of pious toil, the legacy of sainted minds, with the nothingness from which the Church sprang forth, like a creation at the voice of God.

From such musings we gather assurance, that if Methodism could scarcely have been brought forth in the present age,—even though the master-spirit of its founder should, like Elijah or the Baptist, have reappeared,—the same Providence which ordained its existence a century earlier, has appointed his successors to toil in another work: just as the pastorate instituted by, and following the apostles, was not required to *found* the church, but to *build* it, "till we all come," says one of these, "in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The infancy of Methodism being passed, care is now demanded for its growth. Its nourishment and culture devolve upon the living generation of its people. Its stature is to be looked to, dwarfishness to be deprecated, decline to be provided against, the perfect manhood of its life to be aspired after, and prayed for,—such a perfection as shall show "the stature of the fulness of Christ."

CHAPTER VIII.

METHODISM.

"The Church being both a society, and a society supernatural, it hath the self-same original grounds which other politic societies, namely, the natural inclination which all men have unto sociable life, and consent to some certain bond of association; which bond is the Law that appointeth what kind of order they shall be associated in."—HOOKER.

THE great idea of the polity of Methodism is UNITY. It seems intended to effect, by voluntary combination alone, what has been accomplished either by state incorporation, or the simple presence of evangelism, when it has impressed its own form on the transmuted materials of Paganism. This idea of Methodism is naturally broad and prominent, as it is mainly the work of one mind of great practical force, and long continued action in creating it. Hence, has issued a type too strongly defined, and rudimentally deep, to have been effaced in after times by the succession of subordinate minds engaged in working it. These have done little more than expand it into details, but with scarce the addition of a single new feature.

To the origin of this unity, may be appended a brief reference to its principles; such as, its doctrinal articles, comprising an evangelical Arminianism, with a distinctive point or two of its own—a doctrinal standard answering to that of Luther's "Stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ;" leaving merely speculative, or very secondary topics, out of its category.

Again, this doctrinal standard is represented by a ministry of equal rights and privileges; compacted into a brotherhood, by the mode in which each is separately inducted into fellowship, and moulded to it by the force of its disciplinary ordinances.

With this, again, is interwoven the *legal element*, intended

to subserve the maintenance of its theology, the balance between the ministry and the people, and also to bind both to a central power. To the conference, as this central power, appertains the power of the keys: it is intra and extra governmental, possessing both the legislative and executive functions; and is itself the last court of appeal, whether to ministers or people.

Another property of the union is its *local* system, which is simply the multiplication of concentric circles, comprising a united pastorate, with graduated offices for localaction.

Further, *itinerancy* may be joined with these, by which particular and disruptive tendencies are cancelled; as each joint pastorate is but a representation of a grand presbytery, and its delegated executive.

This unity, then, consists in a central power, with certain laws and administrative arrangements, the joint action of which is self-conserving. From these issue the recognition of *relations*, such as those of rule and dependence; with their corresponding obligations, which, though not originating in compact, are regulated by it, and co-existent with it. In aid of these, rise up the idiosyncracies always indigenous in such associations,—a large class of sympathies awakened and kept in action by them.

This self-conservation extends to various particulars,—as doctrinal purity, on which the whole is based; and personal religion, which, originated and fostered by its various ministers, returns to it a grateful and impassioned attachment. Its economy is invested to its people with a hypersacredness; while its ordinances and forms of communion rank next to the verities of religion. Such a church inspires more than a spiritual patriotism; it is the home of a happy and filial-tempered family; but prone to regard the Christian commonwealth with disproportionate interest. Self-conservation respects also its independence and perpetuity; its hold upon its people for their own highest spiritual good,—but not without reference to its own name and in-

fluence in the world, as a branch of the catholic Church, engaged, by the most approved means, to spread the faith and dominion of Christ to the uttermost. The proper tendency of this unity is indeed expansion, which, on the ground of its exclusively religious principle, is more free and vigorous; all the more human because divine.

To the strength of this principle may be added the sublimity and intensity of those instincts which evangelism creates; the superior leverage which inheres in all corporate forms of humanity; the well-compacted agencies which a large system supplies; the means of self-accumulation, as well as the aspiration and courage arising from a feeling of sufficiency to attempt great things. Missionary operations are illustrative of a conservative reaction, as well as of the expansive power resident in a connexional system. These, as issues of a union, have both spread and consolidated it; no unattached churches being able to vie with it, either in the amount of their resources, or the breadth and success of their labours.

But the weakness and the strength of Methodism are coincident. A numerous and graduated agency, designed both to maintain and extend it, must be well-conditioned in order to *effect;* and, in the absence of this, weakness and disorder ensue. The working material appropriate to Methodism, can only be secured by the careful selection and able training of a vigilant pastorate. Here itinerancy halts: as a pastoral system, it is desultory, from too wide a surface of action, and a lack of *subsidiary motives*, to fulfil that relation. Its general effect is to weaken the sense of responsibility, and to discourage effort in the ministry. Its effect on the people, is to detach them from *persons*, and to cast them entirely on the *system*.

A modification of itinerancy is a certain, and not a remote futurity. Antagonist to the sentiments of the age, and to the example of other churches, it cannot, ultimately, persist in holding up an anomaly. The difficulties of the

pastorate are increased, also, by the diminution of its relative superiority, when grouped with a large lay agency. Hence the wisdom of the step, but recently taken, of providing an educated ministry.

Adverse aspects of society to the peculiarities of the Methodist polity, may be noted. Such are the assimilation of all church constitutions to a political basis; an extreme self-dependence and egotism, as a character of the age; an instinctive dislike of whatever is antiquated, or somewhat authoritative, in its cast of appeal: these, and the like causes, effect a wider chasm between society and a particular form of religious polity, than the mere set *depravity* of our race. It may be more out of *chime* with society than ordinary. When revelation itself is but too commonly assaulted, and classed with myths and traditions, it is no wonder if the less consonant modes of its presentation with popular feeling, are classed with worn-out things.

These ideas also tinge the mind which a church takes in, working a silent incongruity between its people and its institutions; so that these moulds of church life no longer answer to the spirit that animates them. The man is not absorbed by his system. There is a residuary element struggling against it, liable to be awakened into sinister action, by new and startling circumstances. Hence, an accumulation of democratic element seems inevitable, which, if resisted, brings disruption,—if yielded to, revolution. Unity also may perish by negation, and not by disturbance only. The compact may be destroyed by mutual alienation, as well as by mutual encroachment; provoking collision, and ending in ruin. Incessant vigilance, and large-hearted prudence, are demanded to take the bearings of a church, as of a nation; to estimate influences, and probable issues; and to provide timely checks and conservations, such as may prevent the ripening of mischiefs, and furnish new forms and force of action. Strength and rigidity must not be confounded: *elasticity* being a sign of unexpended life; a

mere adherence to forms, as prescriptive and venerable, a sure sign of *old age*.

From the only avowedly infallible, and, therefore, the only immutable church in the world, we may not disdain to take a lesson,—"fas est ab hoste doceri,"—which, nevertheless, with infinite versatility, adapts its instrumentalities to all varieties of men and times.

The unity of the governing power with itself, is, if possible, yet more imperative; it being, perhaps, an unique example in Church history which Methodism exhibits, of an extended presbytery, so perfectly amalgamated. This, however, must still consist with *Individuality*, and membership with manliness. Liberty is undoubtedly modified by the nature of such a compact; but this very fact should create an additional jealousy to guard the remainder from curtailment. The articles and influences of *combination* cannot be made to rival the *unities of nature;* nor points of conventionalism assimilate with the properties of an essence. Strongly defined, they must leave wide interstices for the range of other relations, save the one of mere brotherhood. Space must remain for the play of diversity of character, and for minds of larger growth; or for the same mind in its stages towards maturity. A man must not be less recognised as an individuality in a Presbytery (the commonwealth of Christianity) than under an Episcopate, its more regal form of embodiment.

It is also necessary to repress, as far as possible, the strong inherent tendencies, in an union, to *politico-esotericism*,—from which it is impossible to separate, as its counterpart, an *ostracism*. Hence naturally arise *parties* in the union, with their tissue of mischiefs, jealousies, restlessness, counter-workings; schism, sooner or later extending through the body, and, like a paralysis, smiting it from head to foot. Other serious, if not fatal, consequences may be noted. A political spirit is fostered by it, on ecclesiastical matters, to which religion itself is in danger of becoming

secondary. The state-action becomes too noisy and frictional to consist with the quiet inspirations of spirituality; it becomes all-pervading as an element, not in the church only, but in the family and social circle,—as little to the health, as to the comfort, of those whom it surrounds.

The difficulty of maintaining the conserving forces of an union, is increased by its growing magnitude, and the complicity involved in its agencies and administration. The central force is more encumbered, and, at the same time, more remote. The sense of dependence on it is proportionably lessened, and, with this, is proportionably depreciated. Its action, though equally important, (perhaps more so,) is viewed with more jealousy; and the smallest increase of momentum, even though to right itself, produces a shock, with its direct consequences—alarm and scrutiny, not unmixed with resentment. A host, in proportion to its numbers, depends on its discipline, which, unimpaired, gives it the unity of a single man; but, on its suspension, confusion ensues, and it may all the sooner become a wreck. The enchantment gone, that swayed so vast an assemblage of different capacities, and dispositions, has left all the jargon of these incongruities to riot till they separate, making the spectacle of its destruction far more wonderful than its creation.

The modes of relief, open to unwieldly and incoherent bodies, are less theoretically than historically manifest. Amendment, or partial reconstruction, is one; the emission of intractable material is another; and a third is a division into several communities, either independent or federally related only. All these, however, have their drawbacks. The primary and true policy is *conservation combined with movement*,—and the one in order to the other.

The currents of society must not be thwarted, or dammed up; but easy channels should be formed for their undisturbed flow, and they should be made tributary to church strength, instead of draining off its life. The happy art undoubtedly

is, that of a musician who combines various, and even discordant, notes into harmony; or, to ascend higher, of the Divine Mind, which combines conflicting powers into glorious unities, by the interposition of such affinities and balances as best serve his ends.

Periodic convulsions, in a body, though they relieve from disturbance, abstract its energies. The residuary becomes effete, while the birth of agitation, for the moment preternaturally active, subsides into permanent torpor. When the separated portion is comparatively fractional only, it is almost as liable to wither and die, as a branch riven from its parent stem; there is the loss of just so much salutary agency to society in general, with a proportionate defalcation from the residuary church. This is all but an unmixed evil. It is only when the seceding mass approximates to the residuary, that the chances of life and growth are increased by the breadth of counter-array, and energetic competition. *Character and reputation* are frightfully deteriorated by the struggles of schisms—incomparably the most intense of human collisions, as they issue from the very depths of our moral nature. It is obvious that frequent internal convulsion and separation must consume much of the life and resources of any community. Their effect must be a *moral* as well as *statistical* retrogression: the results of former toil are squandered; the harvest of years strewn to the winds. Considering the terrifically Antinomian exhibitions of such seasons, and the stimulus they give to the infidel and profane, the wonder is, that religion itself, in any particular form of it where this happens, survives the blow,—not that it should, for a time, languish, or its recovery be slow. Such a fact seems to declare its divinity as a thing separable from the worst possible accidents, and that its resurrectional energies are as the reflection of that of Christ himself, from the tomb; a type, too, of its final triumph alike over the treachery of friends, and the insults of foes.

Perhaps the chief element in generating disturbance and dissolution in any large corporate form of Christianity, may be detected in the very principles of its origin; namely, the necessary adhesion in forming it of much that is *simply human*, and therefore liable to change, and the *aggregations* of the same nature attendant on its progress. These become, or are in danger of becoming, not *very subordinate accessaries* to the divine principle, but *substitutes* for it. The human canonry is liable to usurp the mind of the community, rendering it therefore more and more subject to cross influences, until the whole is regarded as a debatable affair; and hence its dissolution may evene, as an organization separable from religion itself, a fact to which men in the earlier stages of their combination do not wake up. Further, as in the order of nature instincts precede reason, and are fundamental to it, while the latter marks the era of manhood; so in societies, instincts are primitive and most cohesive, but their history shows a transition analogous to that of nature, as their *permanent* condition. This correspondence indicates a stage of existence, and an outset of change; also the wisdom of calculating and providing for it, supplementing waning sect instincts, by sound reasons of preference. Successive generations can hardly be expected to view the same object, as those who came before. With distance, haze and indistinctness are identified. Altered position implies, if not altered relation, altered aspect and interest. The primitive bond, so strong from its freshness, or the small numbers it enclosed, attenuates in proportion to its length and antiquity. Such tendencies are *natural*, and therefore *resistless*. Fraternity, so strong in a mere clan or handful of individuals, runs out in a nation. Early associations and traditions are enchantments no longer. The era of legend and poetry has passed away, utility is consulted, comparison is active; especially, it becomes difficult to mould youth to correspondence with an olden type. They seem to have drawn breath in another

clime, and to break away to affinities of their own. It may be, that the religious world itself has changed its mould; older forms may have been resuscitated, deriving a charm from their heraldry and historic fame, favoured by the ever capricious turns of times, and the tendencies of man to make his antipathies and elections change place. *Spiritual* unions, to be perpetuated and extended, demand an undiminished religious energy. They are like classes of plants, which require a certain clime as proper to their life and fruitfulness, but which die if removed from it, or should the altered axis of the globe give them another aspect to the sun. *Voluntary* churches can only work well as they adopt the entire New Testament law; not as a theory, but as a practical currency. This, to them, must be in the place of artificial guides and restrictions, such as state charters, and state sanctions; *they* must be *internally* ruled and fully pervaded by the "kingdom of heaven," or else schism and dissolution must ensue.

The prospects of Methodism are bound up with its efficiency. This respects both the system itself, and the working condition of it. That system can hardly be otherwise than valuable, which combines so pure a theology, and so well compacted an organization, with inherent tendencies to produce wide effects. It is no small honour to the piety both of the ministry and the people, that the *doctrinal* foundation of Methodism has never been disturbed: for this does not seem to be the result of *compact*, much less of legal intervention, but of deep and universal conviction; and this again, not the result of a comparatively sheltered position from the assaults of error, which has beset society and invaded other churches, no, nor even of speculative enlightenment, but of *experimental* demonstration, both in those who have dispensed, and those who have received its teachings. Its piety has been singularly self-conserving, its *life* has been its *light*. Its doctrinal fountain has flowed onward unpolluted. Faithfully has the united brotherhood

stood as guardian of this precious trust; "the river which makes glad the city of God."

The etching of John Wesley's discipline has been, perhaps, somewhat more than filled up. Yet ministerial integrity has been uniformly aimed at, and, on the whole, well secured. In general, the balance has been struck between the extremes of lenity and severity, in the mutual dealing of the brotherhood.

Nor ought the question of a well fulfilled trust to be deemed secondary, when we would form an estimate of a religious system, after a century's trial. These high functions of supervision are vital, and, indeed, normal to the whole detail of disciplinary administration. The experimental science, too, of divine things, as a special feature of Methodism, has never been given up. This is its theology *tested*, not propounded only, and abounding in spiritual symphonies and confessionals, which make its church peculiarly a community of friends. The office of Methodism, as a system, seems to be, both to hold forth the truth in its most simple and concentrate form, and to rear a people to give a living exposition of its divinity to the world. These two principles act upon each other, and, in combination, exhibit the true glory of Methodism. As it mainly struck up the light of evangelism in the last century, so it is now concerned in maintaining it, amidst many adverse omens.

In this great work, its steadiness is now increasingly important. As to the mode of its ministry, and the appropriation of its agency, its one characteristic is *practical intensity*. Its eager and incessant demand is, for action from its people, but especially its ministers; drawing upon them, even to exhaustion, yet in full accord with the spirit of the age, which in every department runs people out of breath. Its itinerancy is, indeed, better suited to an evangelizing outset, than to the work of a pastorate; demanding inferior, or rather different, qualifications, but compensating this by the brevity of its labours, and the brisk circulation

it keeps up in the community. Undoubtedly it contravenes nature in many points, and hence can hardly become a permanent institute; but it admirably comports with the genius of an union, converting gifts into a public treasury, instead of a private monopoly. Further, it sectionalizes life, greatly to the public advantage, but it has little sympathy with family interests, with citizenship, or old age. From the bustle and surface of its action, it seems to be more affluent in results, than a fixed ministry; but it is far less quietly pervading and deep, in its hold upon the heart. It exceeds in breadth, but lacks in depth. It makes marriage only with the system, but in particulars it is a celibate.

The founder of Methodism, by public document, formally constituted the church which bears his name, an *unmixed* polity, in a qualified sense, an hierarchy—having consigned to the men he had incorporated with himself, the double powers of teaching and rule. In this instance, also, his practical simplicity was nothing else than a far-sighted sagacity; a ministerial peerage, under the necessary conditions of voluntaryism, being, for all practical ends, equivalent to a mixed constitution, without entailing upon it the weakness of an heterogeneous embodiment. The *jus divinum* was *not* made the pivot of the polity, it was rather the issue of the simple idea of unity, whence a more elastic and uniform ordinance might go forth, than from two forces equipoised, but endangering collision. Besides, in an economy which, as popular, must needs in its progress aggregate a large democratic element, this arrangement seemed to afford the proper counterpoise. Democracy has its range assigned to it in other departments, rather than the legislative; just as in the constitution of a human being, the reflective powers are different from the active, but in perfect concord with them. As the ministry is, in the order of the spiritual creation, prior to the Church, though actually coextent with it, and has inherent in it the corresponding functions of teaching and rule, such a platform seems simply apposite. Hence

to subvert it by laic ascendency, involves a deposition of the pastorate from its just prerogatives, which, if joined to the actual force of democracy in local administration, would reduce it to a mere instrument of popular will.

This remark, however, is not pointed against a mixed constitution in the abstract, or under certain conditions, which may possibly work to advantage, or at least without detriment. It may be a judicious settlement of a church in its outset; but viewed as an after element, intruded by a preternatural effort of democracy, would probably exceed all bounds, and destroy that which it sought to amend. The just claims of a people to church influence, cannot, even if it were willed by a governing power, *eventually* be repressed. Power being a gift like the ministry itself, and to be ranked among the "all things" which an apostle says are "for their sakes," both the piety and intelligence of the ministry forbid personal aggrandizement to become its end; but, on the other hand, a denudation of all prerogative cannot be submitted to, without offence against conscience, and the sacredness of a trust held for, and from Christ; and were unions necessarily to entail such an evil, the argument against their lawfulness would be demonstrative. But are the people therefore to be unduly depressed? Are not their rights as well defined, and as sacred, as those of the ministry itself? Without arrogating the governing power in a church, is not *their will* conditional to its exercise, restrictive of it, and necessary to its wise and beneficent results? How can the encroachments of despotism be ultimately maintained where the functions and even subsistence of the ministry depend upon popular will? The measure of this liberty, however, must quadrate, as in the state, with the fitness of those who claim to exercise it,—on their intelligence, moderation, and good principle. They should know their system well—should take its bearings on the civil epoch of their lives—should be deeply versed in New Testament wisdom.

Such conditions imply corresponding ones in the ministers, who must learn not only *what they owe to system, but what system owes to them,*—that as its living impersonation and executive, they must adjust it to new times and circumstances, breathing its sympathies as intensely as possible into the hearts of their people. Men are more powerful than mere institutions, however necessary as models of actions. A ship is a necessary accompaniment of a crew; but it can neither make a voyage, nor gain a victory, without their living mastery and prowess. A state is a social regime, but it is little more than a paper programme without the patriotism, talents, and energies of the men to whom it is intrusted.

The attached, but unfettered and able manhood of the ministry, can alone work Methodism. The image of their young and free devotedness, must radiate over its people, and be thrown back again upon itself. This action and reaction of the energy which springs from the ministry, will recruit it with gigantic force. Suspicion and altercation only serve to lock it up, or wear it away. Petty controversies on the meum and the tuum, may prevail over the broad interests of the commonwealth, and the vision of destiny be veiled to the blear-eyed perverseness of partizanship.

The state of Methodism, as adapted either to sustain or advance its position, is a fact of the first importance, while an inquiry into it is, perhaps, neither easy nor delicate. Introversion by a large community, is almost as rare and superficial an exercise, as that of an individual mind upon itself. Our ordinary habits are simply objective directions of our nature. Phenomena are seldom analyzed. Men are in general interested only in facts,—inquiries and criticisms being forborne, should prosperity flow on, and no checks and disturbances embarrass their affairs. This, however, must be an unwise habit for beings to rest upon, who live on a theatre of change, where events, for the most part, are but advertisements for subtle, complicated, and latent causes,

such as concern, not the philosopher only to search out, but the clear-sighted, practical, man to descry. From this acumen alone issues all the prescience allowed to man; but small as it is, (often yielding little more than guess, or at most, probability,) it is a precious province of preveniency, and a sort of predestinative faculty. The shadows of events (as the phrase is) are in truth their spiritual precursors—Platonic ideas, from which issued an universe. Without some knowledge of this kind, measures of public, as well as of private utility, may be born out of due season. Men are taken aback by the sudden sweep of agencies, generated in privacy, and grown gaunt under the shadows of the spiritual world. The crisis comes on at once, amidst the silence, impotency, and confusion of ignorance. There is a sense, in which, as distinct from that of the mere ministry, watchmen may be said to stand upon the walls of Jerusalem; spirits like that of the prophet, who said, "I stand continually in my ward whole nights," ready also to respond to the challenge—"Watchmen, what of the night? The morning cometh, and also the night." Or who answer also to Solomon's description of a wise man, whose "heart discerneth time and judgment."

These remarks bear on the spiritual analysis of Methodism, as suggested by the facts of its condition. What then are those facts, and what their legitimate exposition? Certainly its general organization is scarcely short of perfection; nor can its mass be viewed as shrunken, if but augmenting slowly. Its edifices have been multiplied, and its institutions shapen out in no mean proportions. Its pecuniary economics are usefully conceived, and faithfully dispensed. Both justice and mercy are combined in its recognitions of the claims of a disabled and superannuated pastorate; and a necessarily stinted, but considerate dealing, is prescribed for the widow and the fatherless; while contingent afflictions are not wholly unmedicated by its charity. In the *stipend* of the pastorate, the extremes of poverty and affluence are

equally avoided. A decent competency is its very maximum; but *destitution* is not in its vocabulary. In this arrangement, the spirit of a brotherhood is strikingly apparent; as near an aproach to equality as possible, being its fundamental idea—the monastic and ascetic discipline alone excepted.

Methodism offers no emolument either to its highest officers, or its most distinguished servants. It holds no bribes for talent—no prizes for ambition; of sinecures it knows nothing; and as far as church dowery is concerned, it is little else than a vow of perpetual poverty. Its ministry, if inferior to some in mental culture, and general accomplishment, is not less distinguished by piety and effective qualifications; such as, teaching power, force of character, and knowledge of mankind. Till recently, they were all but self-trained, possessing few adventitious aids; but with developments of stronger manhood, showing a more striking discrepancy with the weaker members of the brotherhood, but imparting an originality and force to their ministry, far more valuable than the most eliminated specimens of merely human discipline. Ardently attached to Methodism, regarding it almost as a moral homœopathy, their steady and patient adherence to its impositions, however onerous, and in many cases trying, is characteristic, evincing the power of an union to magnetize its members throughout, and to render the species as the genus, set forth by an apostle,—"None of us liveth unto himself."

These remarks are borne out by the testimony of Methodist congregations, which, despite of the manifold competition of the day, and the adverse accidents of Methodist history, are, perhaps, more numerous now than ever. This is an evidence both of ministerial capacity, and integrity; possibly of more than this, of an impression that the primitive blessing attendant on Wesley's doctrine, Wesley's preachers, and Wesley's people, is yet far from being expended. Yet what a dream is optimism applied to any

human thing! Or what better characteristic is there of church wisdom than that of even apostolic aspiration, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before?"

Such is the present motto of society; nor must the ministry lag behind in the race. To an apostolic zeal must be added a susceptibility of impression from all surrounding life, with a full blending of the lights of our times, in such harmony, as to render the pastorate powerfully pervading. A ministry on which the evening shadow gathers, belongs to a departing age, and is chiefly influential over its compeers in cast and years. The *morning* life of society demands a *morning* light, to cast its inspiration and guidance over those who have yet to tread the mazy fields of the world. The truth, impersonated in sanctified advocates, should go out to the line of contact with the living mass, and rather be in advance, than require to be reminded that it is yet considerably in the rear. The *youth* of our churches particularly require a pastorate, whose very spell may cancel many baneful influences which set in upon them from without. They need able guidance amidst the perils of inexperience, and a pillar around which they may parasitically entwine themselves, and rest, when harassed by the onsets of a meretricious scepticism. Disciples in general should know that the defence, as well as teaching of Christianity, may be safely left with its authorized keepers; who, if not always very learned or scientific, sufficiently apprehend the connexions of these with religion, and how to explode fallacies, to repress vaunting, and to hold the Thermopylæ of their faith against all the hosts of the foe. It may not be rejoined, that Revelation is fixed—science, progressive; that dogmatic teaching must therefore be a monotony, whose force lies in reiteration, emphasis, and passion; that, as an ordinance of God, preaching is a grand specific, rather weakened by analysis, or by assimilation to modes of science, than dependent upon any such auxiliaries

for its culmination. For it must not be forgotten, that if there be a RUDIMENT in Christianity, of divine efficacy, there is also a PERFECTION, which ranks it as the first philosophy; that it is the veriest transcendentalism, because it sublimates both the moral and intellectual man together, scanning the whole pathway, and objects of existence, future as well as past; and that, if nature itself be but a vast congeries of facts, from which philosophy drinks in oracles, forms systems, and generalizes almost without limit, the Bible itself is nothing else than an historical collection of facts conveyed to us by divine testimony, and forming a nucleus of boundless radiations to the eye of a divinely illumined reason. The existence and the aliment of piety, may indeed be drawn from the facts themselves, and their most simple deductions, just as life is drawn from the breasts of nature, to which all instinct turns itself; but a profounder and more versatile teaching must be needed in an age of books, and the power of a copious argument for revealed religion indispensable, when the grand struggle for the mental dominion of the world, is pitched between the disciples of the Bible, and the hosts which a sceptical philosophy, fanatical, but subtle and determined, musters to the battle. Mere assumption is now less safe than formerly. The foundation must be sometimes laid afresh, and the rock shown on which the Church is built. The pious and earnest teacher will be liable to be regarded as a mental slave, or a dwarf; his orthodox phrase and unctional pathos, will place him in strange isolation from many an apparent worshipper, who secretly draws his principles from other springs, and merely conceals a deep apostasy from truth, by a few decencies and conventionalisms, which he may think it convenient to retain. It may be true that the halo of intellectualism is not the most *divine* aspect of the ministry, and that its influence, at best, is little more than negative; that the greatest power of it lies in the adaptation of a few great truths to the heart; still the gift

itself cannot be overvalued, as being that wisdom which conserves the simple and confiding piety of the Church; and the might, which, like that of the apocalyptic angel, casts the chain about that Old Serpent that has deceived the nations, ere he shall be cast into the pit. The Church should have its champions in times of danger, who can speak with the enemy in the gate; or draw the bow of steel; or chase the spectral forms of error, as the shades vanish before the eyelids of the morn.

Methodism, as a system, is, from its very energy and compass, too busy and miscellaneous in its mode of service. Its departments of duty are too numerous, to consist with the simplicity of well sustained action. The ministry suffers by being sectionalized, till its great primary function is seriously impaired, and is in danger of becoming too mechanical, by attention to the detail of small things. Pulpit service is reduced to a mere item in the lengthy catalogue of church business; and it is well, if it be not considered a very subordinate one too. But this indignity becomes retaliative. Parsimony is blight, the spell of the ordinance is broken, and trite teachings are recompensed in listless and declining auditories.

A feature something like a peculiarity of the day, as it respects Methodism, ought not to pass without notice—it is the greater reluctance manifested, than formerly, by its congregations, to pass from the outer sanctuary of its worship into the pale of its communion. The disposition to hear and to appreciate its theology, is much wider than the disposition to pledge adhesion. In this is often found its most intransmutable element, imparting magnitude to its status, but impeding its advance. This seems to border upon mere conventionalism, and to be nothing better than a slender preference for one form of Christianity over another. It seems to intimate that the terms of Methodist communion are less congenial with the times; that its discipline is either too pure, or too antiquated for its candidates; or, that the spi-

ritual force computed in its platform has so far receded, as to leave it without any present adequate support. Yet these are not merely the *distinctive*, but the *vital* forms of Methodism—the indices and bulwarks of its church being. To abandon or to lower the class-meeting, for example, would go far to abnegate the very principle which it embodies, and the supervision of membership which it has set up. In the computation of diminished force, (if such be the fact,) the ministry itself cannot escape scrutiny. With its general ability allowed, is it less specifically an awakening and experimental agency? Or, are the piety and intelligence of those to whom the office of spiritual training is assigned, at all proportioned to so momentous a work?

But, however this may be determined, the *creative* and *conserving* forces of Methodism are not at par with each other. If even the power to arrest and subdue men be lowered, the power to retain them is still less. The received element is imperfectly assimilated, and far too much of it is thrown off as waste. Perhaps some emendations, rendering the conditions both of membership and office more stringent, would restore this balance so necessary to the compactness and extension of the body. The breadth of *lay agency* in Methodism, makes both the selection and the culture of it a matter of the first importance. The standard of qualification should be kept up, not lowered, to meet a supposed working emergency; nor its gates of office so widely opened as readily to pass the multitude of applicants, always more ready to obtrude themselves into positions of publicity, than those who more intelligently ponder the difficulties and responsibilities pertaining to them. Through default, in this respect, weakness and extension in Methodism must go hand in hand. Its character must deteriorate, and its mission be abridged of its fruits. Whenever, as now, new or modified combinations are sought for, and the births of speculation are as sudden as they are numerous, the sobrieties of practical suggestion

are liable to be set aside. These offer no stimulant in comparison with the blandishments of idealism; but this fact commends the seasonableness as well as importance of such suggestions. The right direction and working of Methodism, are of primary consequence; its *genius*, rather than *detail*, is to be seized and transmitted; nor can it value as fealty whatever would eschew the facts of its history, or invalidate its pledges to the world.

CHAPTER IX.

CHURCH SANCTITY.

"The saints have their sovereignty, their distinction, their victories, their splendour * * * They are watched by God and angels, and are unseen of mortal sense and refinement."—PASCAL.

"There is no happiness, no rationality, no virtue, no gracefulness, like the true Christian's."—PASCAL.

THE tone and character of churches in general require to be elevated. Extending Christianity, however pure in its outset, is liable to corruption from the laws intended to give it ultimate prevalency in society. As it moves on from small beginnings and wins more territory, it exposes more surface to the action of adverse elements. It becomes less compact, less concentrate, less itself, than when separated and compressed by the massive alien substances surrounding it. Gaining more freedom, it is also more liable to volatilize, and its stronger elements to escape. It offers more points of contact with the world, which become avenues, through which, too often, the poison of its principles and spirit is imbibed. The relations of life oblige to constant intercourse with unchristianized mind; which, as indicative of its fearful prevalency, its ubiquitous presence, is in Scripture significantly called "the world."

Citizenship entails its duties and its perils to religious men. Customs are nothing else than human ordinances—social precepts. Example is a living, walking, talking law, whose despotism is absolute. Recreations, fashions, business, are in all their multitudinous varieties subject to its sway. The mind of the majority must bear social, as well as political rule. Men shrink as convicted culprits from its sentences; its decisions thrill the man, and hurry him along, as does the planet which carries us all. What profound wisdom, what prescience, as well as love, does our Lord's prayer for his people breathe forth! "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." And what coherence is there between the prayer and the words which followed it!—"sanctify them through thy truth;" containing, as they do, the only philosophy of the possible co-existence of two such societies, as the world and the Church. It is not local severance, an immutable ritualism, or mere peculiarity of habit, that the prayer for keeping has respect to, as the means of its accomplishment. Nothing external is pointed at in the nature of a badge, as a constituent of separation; or even a nationalism, such as was the palladium of ancient Israel. The Church was to be *in* the world,—impacted in every form of society under heaven,—to be a kingdom within a kingdom, as, in the prophet's vision, there was a "wheel within a wheel." Christianity, in its outset, could not *nationalize;* this was its ultimate, not its primary condition. How then could the Church be in the world, and yet be separate from it? By its being sanctified through the truth. This is the only answer the question admits.

The action of the world for evil upon the Church is chiefly twofold,—upon its *morals* and upon its *spirit;* upon its social virtue, and upon its devotion. True, it is a theatre for the display of both, but it is a perilous ordeal to each. The nature is still human, though declared not to be "of the world." It is feeble, accessible to temptation, strongly

biased by the senses, easily infected by the contagion, that everywhere reigns in the abode of its life. Often is the man prone, by a fallacy of his reason, to sever his religious from his secular character; his Sabbath duties, his prayers, his church proprieties, from the grosser avocations of the six days; to walk as a man, rather than as a saint amongst men; to lower himself to the existing standard of conduct around him, more than practically to protest against it. Thus, while disowning the supremacy of religion *in morals*, he withdraws himself both from her shield and sun; and, by not aiming higher than the world, in the things of the world, he is liable, as a retributory dishonour, to fall below it.

In every possible relation and business of life, religion is, what the Bible terms it, "wisdom." It does not, indeed, supply what nature has denied,—a certain perspicacity of mind; a lynx-eyed penetration, by which the whole hemisphere of terrene things is surveyed; a readiness and mastery of calculation on chances and probabilities; a promptness to see and seize opportunities of advantage, to avoid or to repair a mischief, an indomitable energy, a pains-taking assiduity:—qualities which bear a high market value in the world, and which may be regarded as the keys to a sovereign position in society. But, if it does not equalize men, as men,—or, if a less obvious meaning of our Lord's words may be assigned to them, "the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light;" yet does it bestow more than compensation, in the principles which it implants, the rules which it makes paramount over the habits of its disciples, and the blessing which it insures from that Providence which often adds visible sanction to the doctrine, that "godliness is profitable unto all things." If it does not lead on in the race of enterprise, yet it certainly dwells with prudence. It is the *moderation* which insures a healthy social action, midway between lethargy and the feverishness of uncontrolled worldliness. It gives forth pulsations properly timed, for sustained and comfortable

action at every point of duty; neither making man an incubus on society, nor a mere slave of the world. It bears a man less to wealth than competency; to mediocrity of estate, more than to the baleful eminency of worldly greatness. It is a safe guide, though not an eager one; its office is oftener to hold back, than to stimulate to brisker motion. Religion ever points to the great way-marks of principle, and enforces the supremacy of conscience over interest. It will not permit the moral man to become the minion of the secular, employed only to turn the wheel of fortune. This wisdom is absolutely proscriptive of all loose doctrines of expediency, and of all adventurous, gambling methods of compassing wealth. It can as little bless, as sanction, any course counter to its authority; or hold fellowship with the "throne of iniquity," which, like the "abomination of desolation," is thus set up "in the holy place."

It is in vain that either gospel grace, or gospel morals, are enunciated in the ordinances of Christ, and strict congregational exercises are steadily maintained, if the profession of allegiance to religion be publicly contradicted by the dreadful emphasis of sinister facts. Shall not "circumcision be counted uncircumcision," when the sign has no counterpart in the spirit, or phases of the character? And can such deception and treachery escape the vengeance of the last great day, which cannot even now screen itself from the indignant reprobation of our fellow mortals? This wound and dishonour of religion, it may be feared, is deep, and all but ineradicable. They have gone far to destroy the *prestige* of religion's name, and to renew the olden by-word and proverb of reproach. Moral judgments are easy and familiar to men utterly void of spiritual discernment; nor can anything redeem saintship from the base surmises of worldly minds, or win respect for its hidden wisdom, but the exhibition of the holiest morals.

The whole question of religion's reality, at least of its individual impersonation, is committed, by the world, to a

practical issue on their own field of observation,—and this trial cannot be refused: the religious principle can, and ought to be, there, as everywhere, triumphant. This experiment is a social necessity; and it is no unreasonable demand upon the Church, that this sign, at least, of its divine birth, should not be withholden by its children, when it challenges the faith and obedience of all men to the gospel, on pain of death. Nor is moral delinquency, in any of its varied forms, to be fully provided against by the *discipline* of the Church, however stringent in principle, and wholesome in effect. The primary and stronger security is found in the dominion of godliness in the heart. *Self-keeping* is a primary obligation, and is to be referred to the responsibilities of a nature graciously rectified. Church discipline and agencies cannot travel with men, to and fro, in every path of life, nor meet them at every step and turn they take. Men are consigned to the custody of their *principles;* and, should these fail, no mere accessories can take their place. There can be no guarantee for the maintenance of a healthy moral action in religious men, but in their truthful adhesion to the great fundamentals of the gospel itself. This is the divine method of securing practical holiness, as its one cherished end. Moral uprightness is sanctification, so far as this grade of virtues is concerned,—these belong not to some unclaimed territory of manhood. They are not the inmost sanctuary of religion, but they pertain to its court, and "the glory" rests upon them for beauty, as well as defence. They are, in great part, the "good works" which men are to see in this light, and so be made to glorify our "Father which is in heaven."

Again, the agency of the world may be as deteriorating to the *devotion* of the Church as to its morals. If it tempt to fellowship with it in adopting another standard of morals than the word of God, it allures to the fornication of its customs and pleasures, to the adoption of its tastes, sentiments, and style of life, in opposition to the simplicity of

Christian rules—the discipline bound upon disciples by the spirit and example of their Lord. These are designed to impart to them a cast very different from an artificial, or self-imposed restraint, from either personal or communal eccentricity, from the petty enactments of sects, or schools, founded only on ex-parte views of truth, not seldom on positive error. This is altogether a heavenly type of man, the development of a higher nature, not the artifice of a devotee, nor strained efforts toward heavenly measures, by a self-made saint, in order to win public homage. It is the heavenly citizen, as he is, a living image of eternal things, a representation, in human phase, of divine principles, of the far and inscrutable forms of immortal beauty. In the disciple two worlds meet, and intersect each other, mingling their several properties to form one character, —"of twain, one new man;" while the earthly man is made the shrine of the heavenly, the mysterious dwelling place of the Triune Glory. It is the full subordination of the lower to the higher nature, so combined, which brings out the perfect type of the disciple. Everything that disturbs, or tends to subvert this relation, obscures and spoils it.

The complete inversion of this principle, is the law of the world, hence stigmatized in Scripture, as that of "the flesh;" that is, the simple predominance of *sense* in man—the lowest possible condition of life,—as implying an utter subserviency of the godlike powers of humanity to external things. This compliance of the whole nature of man, with the laws that bind it to the world, proves the complete divorce of the reason and moral powers from their own native sphere of things; their bent is like the "spirit of the beast," "downwards." This minifies man inexpressibly. It virtually annihilates the divine image within him, and, cancelling the bond of his immortality, strikes him out of the high category of existence, in which angels stand as his peers. Life becomes a dream; "vanity of vanities," nothing. Yet is this scene as sensibly truthful, as the body

and its surrounding materialism, vividly decorated, full of interests and excitements. Here the world of men dwell, and pay their homage to the temple that surrounds them, rather than to the INVISIBLE that fills it. The proximate holds supremacy over the remote; and the condition of a whole existence resembles that of a cone, resting upon its point, instead of its base.

It is a leading property of spiritualism in religion to attemper, as it intermingles the duplex forces which meet in our restored nature; to restrain either from unmodified dominion, yet, forbidding the flesh to become ascendant. The regency of the latter, is the moral annihilation of our manhood; the absolute preponderance of the former, would be overwhelming to the earthly man; "the powers of the world to come" were so disproportionate to those of the present, as to strip the surrounding system of the interest which existing relations to it imply. This would amount to a virtual abrogation of every law of individual existence, inconsistent with the *probationary* nature of our present state. Hence becomes most manifest, that the evangelic, and the ascetic mortifications, are altogether different courses of discipline. The one implies only local separation from the world, or the super-induction of alien habits in the midst of it—it being to society, what an amputated, or palsied member, is to the body; sympathy between it, and the living frame, has ceased, as also the sway of volition, which all other members of the body obey. On the contrary, evangelical virtue is charged with *humanity*; it is reciprocal and expansive; in some sense, the awakened life of the soul, its uplifted wand over all the sphere of nature that surrounds it. Its vision is widened, and its passion enlarged. The invisible lends its lustre to the visible; and the spiritual, the divinest element of good, compensating the inherent deficiency of the creature, greatly enhances it, diffusing its own plenitude over the whole territory of life.

But this spirit of evangelism, while it enlarges human

capacity, refines it also. If it does not make men "as gods, knowing good and evil," it exalts them greatly above their fellows. It does make them lords over their brethren; and renders the brief scripture of St. Paul, a grand complimentary axiom, "the world is yours." It purges the soul of the childish temper, as well as of the idolatry of the fleshly nature. It bestows an universal continency, a manly independence, of which other minds know nothing. "I know," said one, "how to be abased, and how to abound; everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need: I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." This spirit neither covets wealth, nor dreads poverty; it neither worships the world, nor despises it. It estimates worldly station by its implied accession to the duties of a moral trust, and the superior power it confers of religious usefulness. Mere self-indulgence cannot be a Christian end. When lawful, its pleasure is gratitude, and its fruit, praise. All its modes and measures too, are subject to the rulings of a divinely illuminated understanding; they are ordinances of heavenly reason.

The great fact, that life, as a whole, is simply a means to an end beyond itself, suggests a thousand applications of this truth to the conduct of human affairs. This one principle hallows the whole domain of sense. It dictates sobriety. It ordains a religious euphony. It separates the world from the *evil* that is in it. It halts, where conformity with it is sinful, either in principle or in act. It judges of acts, in themselves indifferent, by their *tendencies* and *implications*. It is wary, or, as inspiration calls it, "circumspect." It can forego a pleasure, or sacrifice an advantage, but cannot slight an obligation, or "break one of the least of the commandments." It discriminates between the barely lawful and the expedient, that is, the becoming, or useful—the extreme bound of liberty, and the most commendable use of it.

Religion cherishes no morbid sensitiveness to the honour of character, but a wise estimate of the force of public opinion. It is sagacious, even to *anticipate* public judgment on particular acts, and to regard what is of "good report." Christianity is a rule of *manners*, as well as of morals—it is supreme over both. Its personal and relative aspects are all characteristically its own. Whatever it adopts of the usages of life, it sanctifies; whatever it repudiates, is evil. Whatever cannot be made to yield homage to the heavenly nature and rule in man; whatever tends to deface its beauty and impair its action; whatever cannot be subject to the sovereignty of the one grand idea of not living to ourselves, can find neither approval nor fellowship in the mind of a disciple. That divine birth which gives mastery over Satan, gives victory also over the world. It arms for persecution. It welcomes the cross. It lives most vigorously, when dying to all things around it. It can never symbolize with the world in the style of its sentiments, in the range of its tastes, in the cares, sorrows, joys, with which its shadows incessantly agitate them. It is as little allured by the entertainments of the world, as they are by the pleasures of religion. The laws of a loftier sphere cancel those of earth, subordinating its influences to divine service, instead of allowing them a lordship over us; these are surveyed as the passing appendages of existence, instead of being our portion and end.

This characteristic of evangelism should be indelibly engraven on the Church, and put forth in full strength before the world. Its reality must not be vindicated to public scepticism, by the sanctimonies of phrase or of habit, but by the authority of deeds, from which there is no appeal. It must make itself *seen and felt* by the only ruling power among men—high-bearing action, faultless and forceful character; fearless of scorn, as heedless of applause; imbued with a spirit of true honour; keenly jealous of religion's rights, and deeply aggrieved by her wrongs.

Much of the service of a disciple appertains to the mere influence of his character, to the cast and style of his living, before the world. This is necessarily a more general element of power than any other, and conditional to a more specific action on behalf of religion's interest in the world. It is a constant emanation, as fragrance from a flower, or as light from the sun. It is subtle and pervasive, the savor of Christ, borne where the ministry and institutes of evangelism never penetrate. It is the *spirit*, rather than the public embodiment of religion, pervading society; teaching and testifying by means of men of every grade and capacity, all the more telling as it is unofficial, unprescribed, and spontaneous; an outpouring of zeal from the fountain of a hallowed nature, and veritable delineations of an inward law. This produces effects, endlessly accumulative of good, though not seen of men, but reserved for the declarations of the last dread day. It is thus that the oracles of Christian truth are echoed in the heights and depths of the world. The salt has not lost its savor, but is everywhere inlaid, and its action becomes ceaselessly assimilating. The sanctuary distributes its streams through many channels, and their course wends far from itself. Its *people* become its guardians and depositaries, charged with its doctrines, and conductors of its blessings. They illustrate its origin, and give amplitude to its dominion Every family and individual, intent on reflecting this character, cannot but be a profitable acquisition to the Church. They uphold the honour of religion in the world, silence the gainsayers, and draw many to the uplifted standard of the gospel. They are fellow-helpers of the truth. They remove hindrances cast in the way by unworthy professors. They add confidence and power to the ministry. They raise the standard of public judgment, and array the conscience of the sinner against his ways. The Church becomes more august in her public mien, and her sons more honourable, as they appear more holy. Her invitations, reproofs, and warnings, are

not doggedly debated against by the proud moralist, or the unconverted listener to her teachings, setting himself in favourable comparison with the average virtue of her people. The distance is now seen and felt, there is a great gulf fixed between them; they are not only *distanced* in comparative goodness, themselves being judges, they are *condemned* by the light thus brought upon them. Grace is felt to be a reality, by their own lack of it; and the obligations and sanctions of the faith, wax into the great duties and prospects of existence. This separate estate of the Church from the world—the proof of its sanctification, and its safeguard from surrounding evil, is to its moral habits, what health is to the human frame—the absence of all disturbing and noxious influences from the seat and functions of life.

Again, it is conditional to vigorous action, to a systematic putting forth of its heavenly endowments to their true ends, and with most prosperous results. A Church, enfeebled by adulterous combinations with the world, must be comparatively inert. It cannot be roused into becoming effort to advance religion, because it has become insensible to its own degeneracy, and the surpassing value of the objects for which its exertions are demanded. It bears, in its bosom, no yearnings for souls, no stirring sense of their worth and danger, no adequate views of the office of Christ, or of the greatness of his salvation. Its ordinances, unsupported by the influences of character, and of deep personal devotion, are bereft of their proper evangelical conditions to the conveyance of blessing. Its routine palls by sameness, or depresses by the barrenness of its results. Personal duties are neglected, or performed carelessly. The tastes and interests of men are in the world, rather than in the Church. They have little love for her, who ought to be their "chief joy." They yield to her neither pecuniary revenues, nor personal services. Her Sabbaths are not "delights," nor her ordinances "wells of salvation."

Men cease to regard the Church as their one great interest in life. They feel no obligation, they discharge no trust; and religion is left to languish, more through the defection of the hearts of its people, than the diminution of numbers in its communities. There is not sufficient thought, feeling, carefulness, prayer, bestowed on the gospel commonwealth to insure its prosperity. Individual life is not instinct, as it ought to be, with Church sympathies and obligations; it is not replenished with its inspirations, and interlarded with the business of a spiritual, as well as of a secular calling. Where, and what, is the influence of the majority of Christian professors on society? and what is the amount of their close, pains-taking endeavour, to bless their generation, and to build up the Church?

Redemption unto God, is redemption from the world; not a discharge from its concerns, but from its spirit and bent. It is the sanctification of all motive and pursuit whatever. It is preservative from all idolatry and defilement, in following out the general business of life; and is the only safeguard against contagion in that sphere, where the mind of the world cannot but bear rule. But religion has, at least, its *residuary* claims on its people, who are all Levites, by the word which is "after the law;" and all participate, in various degrees, in the priesthood of the last covenant. They are all the Lord's anointed, and have, of need, "somewhat also to offer." "Ye shall be named," says the prophet, "the priests of the Lord: men shall call you the ministers of our God." This lofty distinction from the mass of men cleaves to all Christians. They are both the temple and priesthood of the living God; and this devotement, by profession, and by the Spirit's sanctification, is to be an ascendant influence in forming their characters, a halo investing the man *everywhere*, but brightest in the sphere of Church duty.

This is the only rule of safety, and of perfection likewise. It binds every member of the Church to seek the public

good, and to view himself as a *pledged* person to the cause he has espoused. The great principles of Christianity require to be thus practically taken up, and their whole effect zealously sought for. Benefits must not be separated from duties, nor receipts from contributions. Individual responsibility inheres according to gifts and opportunities; and, though not self-imposed, is accepted as the consequence of a church condition and church blessings. And who could desire, even could he claim, a dispensation from such services? What bond could be dear, or mighty, should redemption's yoke be cast away from us? From what law beside, can our nature's rectitude be made to issue; or, the rewards of heaven crown the epochs of our immortality? And what are the ultimate proofs of an evangelical possession, if the evidences of sanctification fail, and the forfeiture of blessing be proclaimed by the absence of appropriate fruits? It may not be concealed, that religious declension, and the disheartening of its people, owe much of their origin to the want of a vigorous *public*, as well as moral conscience, and a thoroughly spiritual character in the Church. The social intermixture between the Church and the world has bred confusion, and now begins to spread dismay. The lines of demarcation, which the gospel clearly lays down, have been passed by those whose jealousies ought to have maintained them, as the palladium of their own safety, and the sanctuary for the world. A *trust* has been betrayed, an advantage yielded up, and results of incalculable moment have been lost. In the process of long and silent deterioration, the world and the Church have been brought face to face, mutually surprised by how small an interval they are sundered, and by how few points withheld from entire amalgamation. What is urgently demanded is, that the world and the Church each keep its own place, and exhibit truthful countersigns; that the Church be fully convinced that the world is the world still, and that coalition is impossible, but by its own apostasy;

that when no fiery trials and ordeals of blood are assigned to it; when recumbent in security, and fully enfranchised in liberty, the primitive badge of its divinity and heritage of its birth have disappeared; that when no persecutions waste it, and no martyred heroism stands forth against the legions of its adversaries, nevertheless its practical sanctity is not to be dimmed, nor its duties to society to be abridged. She is to vie with her more renowned epochs in examples of saintliness; she is not to be corrupted by peace, who triumphed in war, or to shape out of her trophies the monument for her grave. Spring time is not to be less auspicious to the vine than winter. It should not fail in its leaf, or its clusters, after it has survived the frost and the pruning knife. Religion's own *internal* fire should conserve its purity, and show its glory, without the purgatory of external sufferings. Equally pure, it should be more diffusive, because fully liberated; more abundant in works, because not wasted by afflictions. Why should opportunities be less precious when abundant and warranted, than when snatched from the oversights of oppression, and environed with the terrors of confiscation, imprisonment, and death? Or why should the work be slighted, which may be pursued without annoyance, if not with applause, when men have braved for it the sorest hardships, and loved it better than their lives? Of all works beneath the sun, religion only is subject to no declension in importance, to no change of relation, or deprivation of prerogative. It is an unvarying, permanent, universal necessity for every man alike. Its appearances and conditions may greatly alter, but its nature and bearings are the same. Its glory is neither derived from persecution, nor from ease; from the number of its disciples, or the endowments of its advocates. Whether shielded or proscribed; immured in dungeons, or driven into exile; whether crowned with immunities, or welcomed to the homes, and by the benedictions of a nation's people,—it is the same holy, humble, benevolent, self-

denying thing—unchanging as its Author, and faithful to its mission. Of the many names which have been appended to its forms and operations, it has adopted none later than the one of its birthday, and correspondent with its baptismal rite. Like Israel, it has passed through fire, and through water, to its present lot in the world. It has experienced every vicissitude which could either corrupt or purify it. It has been put to every test which Providence has permitted, and the powers of evil furnished. It has tasted of every cup, and been familiarized with every estate of earth. Its history has been a strange record of starts, pauses, and retrogressions—of unfolding glories, and sudden obscurations; but its *nature* is ever independent of its fortunes, and of its people. As a revelation of God to man, and his ordinance for human restitution, it reflects his moral image as it exists, and reposes on the foundations of his administration, which it is intended to unfold and perfect, just as identically as these are in operation, throughout all ages. It revokes neither promise nor command. It neither deposes law, nor stints grace. Its ordinances are immutably fixed, its aspects are all simply administrative. Exposition, overture, and enforcement, are the chartered duties of its ministry; submission, reception, conformity, transmission. the great behests upon its people. But what Christianity is, as an abstraction, is one thing; and what it is as a human development, another. The same firmament is chequered by varying atmospheric temperaments. Its lofty arch, its marine and azure, its lunar glow, or starry peerings, do not ever show; nor the same sun always look down from his lofty chamber in bridegroom beauty, but, swathed in haze and cloud, gives mightier demonstration of his prerogatives, than when shining in his strength; and gathers a deeper, if not so enraptured a homage, from all beneath him, than when his gifts are unrestrained.

CHAPTER X.

CHURCH VISITATIONS.

"How should faith triumph in the apprehension of the absolute immensity and omnipresence of the blessed Spirit, by which this great work is to be wrought and done in the world!"—JOHN HOWE.

"Is it not strange that, in a Christian country there are many at a loss to conclude whose work this is, whether the work of God or the work of the devil? and that because it is attended with a mixture of error."—JONATHAN EDWARDS.

"God be praised, there were such disorders as these, and well would it be for us were our religious assemblies frequently interrupted by such disorders."—R. HALL.

REVIVAL, is a fuller life bestowed on the Church in general, or on some portion of it; and cannot but imply a visitation of grace to the surrounding world. It is the quickening of souls dead in sins, and the exaltation of such as do live, to "the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." It creates both intensity, and extension of dominion. Its effects are purification and increase, a fulness of individual possession, and a multiplication of converts to the gospel. It is a larger measure of the "great salvation" to the people of the Church, and a redundancy of the heavenly baptism shed on them, to the world in general. It makes pious minds more quick-sighted in divine things; gives vividness to their apprehensions of Christ, and of his kingdom. It greatly enlarges their affection toward Him, toward his people, his service, and interest in the world. It renders them more heavenly-minded, simple, childlike, humble. It redeems them from worldliness, carelessness, pride, and self-seeking, and tends to make them all, according to their several capacities and conditions, marked examples of religion. It is emphatically the Redeemer's coming to Zion, as the fire of the refiner, and the soap of the fuller, who, as Lord of his temple, pu-

rifies it, and the whole body of Levites appertaining to it, "that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." By revivals, the spiritual are made doubly spiritual; the lukewarm, zealous; indolent and heartless professors are roused from their false security; the wavering become decided, and the weak, strong.

By revivals, that is done suddenly and powerfully, which ordinarily remains undone, or, at best, proceeds but tardily. The characteristic demarcations of moral condition, of long continuance, and all but indelibly stamped, are at once effaced, and whole congregations seem blended and recast by a sovereign grace from "on high." The most stubborn natures become pliant; the most coy and shrinking, bold in confession, and prompt to every pious undertaking. The most cold and rationalistic temperaments, show the glowings of a deep inward fire; pride is exchanged for lowliness, and the cynic himself is turned into an imploring penitent. In fact, the power of God is made extraordinarily manifest. It pervades the whole church. It converts, and transforms, at once. It wounds and heals, with equal sovereignty. It moves minds, as the blast does the trees of the wood, and bows them down, as by the voice of the Lord, "full of majesty," which "discovereth the forests, or divideth the flames of fire."

The characters of these operations, prove their origin. There is a large individual advance, though of very different degrees, in Christian holiness. There is an infusion of equal sanctity and joy, in believers' hearts. Religion now holds a perfect mastery over them. They are now fully "redeemed unto God." Practical godliness, in all its branches, is vigorous; there is no taint of worldliness, either in character or in temper. The shrine of manhood is irradiate with the indwelling glory of truth and grace —the very image and fulness of Jesus Christ. There is a fresh outbreak of spiritual life, a bounding of it onward, and upward, to a degree wonderfully beyond its ordinary

measures of progress. The powers of the economy of grace seem to reveal themselves analogously to those of the kingdom of nature; themselves the favourite emblems by which prophecy foreshadowed them. "I will plant in the wilderness, the cedar, the shittah-tree, the myrtle, and the olive-tree. I will set in the desert, the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together; that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."

Revival then is to be distinguished from reform in religion. The first denotes an *inward and spiritual effect;* the last, an *external restitution.* The one is symbolized by the re-kindling of the altar's fire, or the restored effulgence of the golden lamp; the other, by the removal of idols, and pollutions, from the sanctuary. The one is *greater* than the other, as being the revelation of the Divine glory *within* the house; the other is simply the re-consecration of it, or the remodelling of its worship. The one is to the other, as the letter to the spirit, the body to the soul. The one is preparatory, the other perfecting. The one is a *human* work, the other exclusively divine. Reform implies, either a return to primitive principles and usages, after a long, and disastrous departure from them; or, in a secondary sense, it may mean emendation only of what exists; the modification of a system on the whole good; a more skilful distribution of its means to their proper ends; or an extended application of them to measures of advance: in either sense, a reform is often urgent, in some instances indispensable. The effects of time, and human agencies, on the purest institutions, may be almost uniformly detected. The encroachments of the world on the Church become but too visible: on the one hand, abandonment; on the other, adhesion, silently, but surely progressing, effectuate changes as great, and far more permanent, than any sudden inroads. They raise no alarm, they call forth no re-

sistance. They are all the more steady in their application, as they are slow; not the offspring of external, but of *moral* causes, identified with the characters of the age, or rooted degeneracy of the Church. Of this condition, insensibility to the doctrine and warning of facts, is a chief features; a settled repugnance to dispassionate review, or fair comparison of primitive days with the present. Progression is the darling fallacy which all agree to foster; while external facts are chiefly adduced, to establish the wished for conclusion.

But the *whole case* of a Church must be carefully examined, before its relative condition can be wisely affirmed; the accordance of its forms with its principles, of its workings with its primitive type and genius. Its primitive vocation and features must be pondered, and its power analyzed. Its successes must be accounted for; and a strict keeping with its facts and principles, be made the regulating spirit of all its ulterior modifications.

Reform, in the worship of a system, for example, must not amount to a grafting upon it of something foreign to its nature. It must be simple development; or, to pursue the figure, mere direction and pruning, which are attempted —Christianity no more demanding uniformity of worship, than speech demands a universal language. The same observation may be extended to the discipline, usages, and agencies of a church. These are idiosyncratic; they are the proper indices of a species, all belonging to the same genus. Nor is it impertinent, as an illustration of the comparative aspects of churches, to apply the apostle's language, affirmative of distinctions in the same church, "having therefore gifts, differing one from another;" or elsewhere, "now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." These peculiarities should not be effaced, they are types of a common evangelism, of great utility; as the vessels of gold, silver, and earth, in a great house, "some to honour, some to dishonour."

Denominationalism, may express secondary truths of great practical worth to society; may concentrate some subsidiary principles, or influences of evangelism, not possessed by all alike. It may become the organ of some feeling, or sympathy of humanity; of some solitary or deeper truth, which the many overlook. It may show some feature of apostolic Christianity, in bolder relief, in more delicate proportion, and in fuller harmony. These separate contributions may bring out the Divine image in perfection, or the evangelic economy in its impress and operative capacity, with superior effect; by sect combination, rather than by amalgamation. Each should therefore be itself. The type should be clear and perpetual, else their particular embodiments of truth will disappear, like the forms and fashions of the surrounding world. This may, indeed, be the design of Providence, but even this consideration may be regarded as a predestination, hinging on unfaithfulness and corruption.

Names and moulds of evangelism may be lost in some far more perfect embodiment, yet reserved to grace, and bless a future age. They may not, they ought not, to surcease, as death, in the corruption of the grave; rather they should survive in more glorious mien, following the ascending track of existence, for which every economy of divine wisdom gives space, till our feeble gaze is lost in the distance of their elevation.

Revival is to be separated from the external resources of a church, from the decencies of profession, or even the prevalence of pure doctrine over its multiform antagonisms. The proper working of revival is, indeed, outward. It is, and must be, growth, because it is life. It is the swell and triumph of life over its barriers, both in the Church and the world. It is omnipotent to seize, and to assimilate; eager for onset and for conquest. Its benediction, from the Triune Name, is, "be fruitful, and multiply." Extension, occupancy, universality, are its own behests,—the full expression of its rights, and of its power. Yet these may be altogether

unrelated to it, and factitious. These material creations, these outward symbols, are all *human* things. The physical, the economic, the intellectual in religion, are things furnished by man. He can scheme, set up, and maintain, religious systems, as he does political ones, and may thus express his wisdom, taste, and power; but "the powers of the world to come" lie beyond his control, except as he recognises them practically and prayerfully, subordinating all his material arrangements to the authority of the Truth, and the law of the Spirit. If his views are bounded by the adaptation of systems, if he rest in the wisdom of *his* plans, and the perfection of *his* work, or, if he commits the interests of his religion simply to human keeping, and the operation of the ordinary laws which pervade all human intercourse, and all human bosoms, he stops short, as much of the *nature*, as of the *ends* of religion. It is no longer a divine, but a human thing. There is still the object of religion—God; there is still the subject of religion—Man; but there is no birth, nor breath, nor substance in it; there is no union between them, no intercourse, recognised because felt. Nothing in man is greater than himself; he is never refreshed, and sublimated, by the communion of his spirit with its Fountain. *Congregational* religion, too, is a flat performance, void of inspiration and life. There is no access sought to "the mercy-seat" in its prayers, no incense ascends in its praises, no soul-melody wafted in its songs. The conversion of sinners is not sought by its ministry, nor the edification of saints by its ordinances. Religion is lowered to a public conventionalism, in which all parties rest, as the acquittal of an obligation, without respect to its proper character and results. It may lack, indeed, every symbol and element of superstition, but it lacks also its *charm*. It may possess every external feature of evangelism, but it shows no life. It is a church, in the sense of a collection of professed worshippers, but it is no part of the body of Christ; for no law of its existence reveals the mystery of an union with Him.

Revival is spiritualism in its strength: it shows little of man, but much of God. It is seen in the beauty of holiness, the deep-toned life of congregational worship, the outbreakings of sanctuary glory; not in the parade of circumstance which men regard as religion, or the monumental effigies which they rear to her praise, confounding these with her living essence. Its very name is alien, where orthodoxy is boasted, and prescription pleaded. It is stigmatized as imposture, or ridiculed as enthusiasm; a reproach to reason, an enemy to virtue. It is dreaded as an epidemic more fatal than the plague,—vulgar even to profanity, or licentious to disgrace. It is not regarded as even *error* in her graver moods, but, excited to wildness, a satyr in his dance, or bacchanalian in his orgies; the cup of its enchantments is more deadly than that of the harlot, and its abominations more shocking, if less veiled, than hers on whose forehead is written "mystery." It is abhorred as a mere revel of abused passions; a whim of sectarianism, itself a laboratory of all spiritual ills; the apocalyptic pit opened, from which issued the smoke and the frogs, to darken and plague the land.

But not only does the worldly religionist caricature the movement we call a revival, others are, in many instances, unreasonably averse to it. It is often regarded by men, not enemies to spiritual religion, with suspicion and alarm. They are sincerely, but excessively, jealous of the *honour* of religion; though, perhaps, this often means only the public status of their own community. They dread the scandal it gives to the world; or they shrink from the over publicity which it attaches to the cause of religion in a neighbourhood; or they fear lest it should evaporate in noisy ebullition, rather than a well-governed expression of religious feeling; lest it should be spurious, consequently damaging,—ephemeral, consequently bringing on a collapse. Their habits, as religious men, are invaded, their views disregarded, their tastes offended. They are alive to their share individually in church responsibility to public opinion,

and to the risk implied in the production of an extensive excitement, in minds of every variety of intelligence and moral condition. They do not separate the operation itself from *its accidents;* nor appreciate its advantages as a set off against its many possible disparagements. Not regarding the *work itself* as paramount to every other, they do not overlook the concomitants that human folly may bind to it. An efficient and almost neutral state of the Church, is preferred to one that invests it with new powers, and places it before the world in an aggressive attitude. Reduction and enfeeblement may be sincerely deplored; but comfort is taken in the prerogatives of a sovereignty which reserves "the times and seasons" in its own power, instead of an enlightened consideration, and a vigorous application of evangelic, published, chartered remedies to existing evils. In a declining state of the Church, reasons are rather sought out to induce acquiescence in it as inevitable; while faith, in its resources, is lowered to a positive diffidency, and the tone of feeling is correspondingly humbled. It is flat and unenterprising: all agencies are pervaded by torpor,—they become intermittent and powerless. Results are scarcely aimed at, because not hoped for. Duty (if performed at all) is regarded as an end, rather than as a means, when disjoined from successful effort.

The reward of toil is its aliment and strength. It reinforces the power which would otherwise expend itself, returning its force as an effect, to give additional momentum to each successive stroke of the agency that produced it. It is like the seed reappearing with increase in the harvest, to be returned to the earth with still greater prospect of multiplication. This law of progress in the Church is essential to its welfare; and, whenever arrested, should, by all proper measures, be set free to operate its own results. No church must be inert. Its *existence* is staked upon action: this is at once the evidence of its life, and the means of its increase.

Every institute of evangelism embodies *practical* truth.

The Church itself rests upon it. This originating idea must therefore be maintained and expanded ceaselessly. This is the wisdom of the Mind that gave it being; and it must radiate in unsuppressed brightness, active and quenchless as heaven's own light. Personal religion is powerfully influenced by it. Cohesion and aggregation are equally secured to it. The soul of the Church, like that of the body, has a felt universality of presence; every member shares the consciousness of a common life, unity, and power; while it ministers somewhat to its weal. A portion of public spirit is found in each, as the proper result of social combination, hallowed by the truth and charity of religion. An image of the whole is presented in each; a transcript of the past and future, finally to be reflected by the mind of the world.

Revival is the restored animus of the Church to its pitch of working power, when it has sunk below it, through the corrupting influence of the world; or, more properly, the unfaithfulness of its own people—to moral agents nothing, being strictly a cause which lies beyond the province of the will itself. It is an awakening after slumber, life after death. It is Zion putting on her strength, starting up at the voice, saying, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." It is a great compensating power for all waste and damage. It renders service, recompense; gospel motive, all-compelling. The spirit of the Church, like that of a convert, is new. A prevailing spirituality sheds a glory on every ordinance and work of religion. Men are captivated by it; they feel and act under the law of an overpowering realization, which renders everything worldly, shadowy, and contemptible. It is obvious that such a power is needed in the Church, to harmonize its doctrines with the character of its people,—its resources, with its obligations to the world. Ordinarily, such a harmony is far from being apparent; facts are in evidence of a painful incongruity. The Church is not adequate to its work; it is not overtaking the march of evil, or staying the plague that

desolates the world. The Church may set up her sanctuaries, and institutes; but she does not pour forth her *heart* upon the world, nor earnestly attempt its conversion. The Church is too *conserving* in its temper; not nobly ambitious, bold, restless, confident. It should transfer to itself the energy and wisdom applied to the business of the world. The Church should be its heavenly counterpart; not an exception to every rule of human conduct. Duty, whether personally or collectively considered, should take the form of a definite service to Christ; as the maintenance of his cause is Scripturally termed "the work of the Lord," not only as done by him, but for him; intrusted to men, though operated by himself.

Revival is the restoration of operation in the Church, of an action at once vigorous and general; it is the effect and demonstration of a power, strong, and all-compelling. It is inward and spiritual; the efflux of a mightier grace than ordinary, leaving the outward condition of the Church unchanged. No influence may aid it from without. It neither owes its origin to circumstances, nor to animal excitement. It is no creature of fictitious agency, a spark kindled by the breath of man, expiring as soon as he ceases to blow it. Agitation is the *effect*, rather than the cause of these Church phenomena; as the wind agitates the face of nature, but is not raised by it. To control it is a human office, so as to prevent the mischief and the scandal of extravagancies; but to give the *impulse*, is the act of God. If religion be a taking hold of God's strength, it can be no wonder that it should imply the taking hold of man's strength also, stirring the very depths of his nature. They are far mightier operations which overturn the dominion of evil in the soul, than those which dry up rivers, or hurl down mountains from their seats, with which Scripture sometimes compares them. The cure of a disease, or the restoration of a limb, may not be effected without a painfully powerful appliance to the whole system of the man; nor is life itself

other than the birth of travail. Should it be therefore strange if the soul have its travail also, and the sorrows of death should environ the gates of its life? Or, is it possible that the great transition of the spirit from "the power of darkness" into the kingdom of grace, can be an event unaccompanied by strong, and even agonizing emotion? The tide of emotion is surely not precluded by religion, and absorbed by the world only. The more lofty and intense exercises of the soul may be well supposed to spring from views of its primary relations, and of its coming final lot, more than from its sensible and fleeting concerns. Its most stirring impulses may surely descend from "on high;" from things as far higher than itself, as all others are beneath it: the weight of eternity, and more than the glory of an universe, descend upon it, to implant and actuate religion. What, then, is even a world to a soul? "Wisdom," says our Lord, "is justified of her children;" they love what others hate, and glory in that which the world contemns. The most characteristic bursts of her spirit are self vindicative; they provoke the world, but gladden the faithful. Her divinity shines forth as in the beginning. It is a distinct and special testimony offered to an age, a locality, or a people, in behalf of Christ, and his kingdom on earth. The Church is enriched with the spoils of the adversary. Lost sheep are borne in triumph from the wilderness to the fold. A jubilee dawns on men, and its joy is felt in heaven.

Revival is a dispensational resource in Christianity, as it is a help, extraordinary, for the Church. Every prediction of "the last days," teems with the visions of an abundant glory, with the display of fulness to overflowing,—fountains, rivers, seas, are the images of its vast redundancy. It is an outpouring from the skies, a deluge overspreading the whole earth. "The accepted time" is "the day of salvation." Grace is to bear an absolute rule; truth to prevail as a noontide sun. It is a feast, a royal plenty, a

board spread "for all nations." It is a fulfilment, everything prior to it being but promise. It is consummation, ripeness of purpose, and epoch. It is a provisional finality, to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken away. No more are the incarnation and the atonement *anticipations* to the Church, they are its *foundations;* facts infinitely affluent in doctrine and power. The spirit is given, not promised, as aforetime. His presence is the voucher of every gospel fact, and the substance of every gospel blessing. It binds the ages of the past with the present, and with the future. The history and the mystery of redemption are alike unfolded by the Spirit. It is the *invisible* which succeeded to the visible administration of the kingdom of heaven, and which is more than compensatory, it is surpassing. His is not only the highest kind of agency, but the only remedial one to mind; at once direct, and unlimited, except by the essential laws and properties of a spiritual nature. His sovereignty comprises every mode and degree of agency within the scope of the redeeming covenant. It varies with time and circumstances, with the intellectual and moral capacities of men, with the conditions of society, and the specialities of individual character. At one time, its prevailing cast of influence may be the tender and the gentle, the persuasive and alluring; at other times, the impetuous and startling. Its visitations are like the tempest and the fire, not the "still small voice." It is seizure, not solicitation; mercy's arrest of the sinner, not her whispered expostulation. One while the Spirit seems to proceed more characteristically in illumination; at another, by strong appeals to the conscience; at another, by mighty touches of the affections. In some instances, his operations may be more gradually developed; in others, they are all but synchronic. Sometimes his action may be more remarkable for extent than for depth, or the converse may be equally conspicuous. Sometimes lengthened preparation may be traced for more decisive operations; then

again, this seems to be altogether dispensed with, and the visitation is as sudden as it is transforming.

The Spirit's course is frequently more discernible among the young, descending even to those of tender years; the downward scale is taken, until, to use a prophetic phrase, he turns his "hand upon the little ones," thence ascending to manhood, and even to old age. There may be also differences observed in the means and occasions of revival. The most usual condition of it is the previous application to prayer by the Church, in an unusual degree, the grace of supplication poured forth upon ministers and people; or it is introduced by some ministerial agency, specially qualified to produce this effect; or by the special influence of even an ordinary ministry, at some particular time, to move and to awaken. Providences, too, of an alarming order, often prepare the way, whether national or local; particularly such as affect life or entail grievous disasters upon families or communities. "Lo, oftentimes God worketh these things with man, to keep back his soul from the pit." Occasions, however, (which perhaps may be exceptions to the rule of the Spirit's operations,) may be noted, when precursory means and instruments have been wanting; when the spirit of prayer in its higher measures has *followed*, instead of preceding the manifestation. He has rather *created* it, than waited for it. Nor has any sign been given, or external agency been specially employed, to give the originating impulse to the work, or desire to seek the gift. The conviction of need may have been unaccompanied by corresponding stimulus to prayer, or exertion of any kind. Adversity may have bred discouragement, and long disappointment have settled into helpless grief. This sovereignty of the Spirit is, in these instances, marvellously commended to our admiration and love. He that strives with men, though they are "flesh," pities his people when they are unfaithful; and fulfils, by these visitations, the prophetic picture of our Saviour's grace, "a bruised reed shall he not break."

If his justice be exact, his grace is abundant. Its ordinary rule and measure, however large, do not exhaust His fulness, nor preclude special emissions on persons, churches, agencies, as it pleaseth Him. As there are degrees of His influence, reduced to the bare entail of responsibility; so there are measures of it which entrench upon the province of a moral freedom. There may be degrees of divine influence, which, under certain conditions, and for a season, are *irresistible:* just as, under certain conditions, merely human influences are so. The human agent conveys his own influence by speech, or action, in so urgent a degree, that one result only is inevitable.

The same issue is also predicable of the force of relations and causes simply physical; but this only takes place under special conditions, and implies no invasion of the moral prerogatives of mind. The mightiest visitations of divine influence do not deprive the man of a moral self-control. They are not the *standard* of a spiritual state, nor the momentum which creates *habit;* they are not *uniformly* compulsive; they *insure* certain effects, but do not *necessitate* them. The man acts *freely,* though the power of the determining motive be extraordinary, and for the time and the act, no alternative is matched against them.

It is an important evangelic axiom, that nothing short of what justice forbids, is impossible to the grace of redemption, and the working of the Spirit of God; nor should any demonstrations of saving power be thought unreasonable in expectation, to faith and prayer, which may seem necessary to convert men to God, and to expel the Evil One. Such demonstrations cannot be irrelevant to a dispensation of moral recovery. They are the proofs of its efficacy, the crown of its perfection. They exhibit a full and sufficient antagonism to "the law of sin and death." Surely, more may be done than merely to equalize the chances of salvation and perdition. If the offence abound, "grace may much more abound;" not only in the worth and freeness

of the blessings of redemption, but in the sovereign power with which they may come to us.

Again, the *public* interests of religion seem to require superadditions of spiritual agency, to what are simply ordinary; for otherwise the force of counteracting influences would seem not to be provided against. The tendencies to declension are, at least, as strong in bodies of Christians, as in individuals. This fact is as sure as experience can make it. It is established by the messages of Christ to some of the first and purest churches. Is, then, human degeneracy in no instances, and in no degree, overruled? Are there no sovereign resources, from which revival and reinforcement may evene, when the prosperity, or even the existence of a church may be perilled?—or when, looking at the case more broadly, the general condition of society seems to bar the ascendency of religion to the ordinary pitch of its agencies? Is it not plain, too, that the *public interest* in religion,—especially that engrossing degree of it, which its supremacy demands, and which is necessary to its dominion,—cannot be secured by tame and common-place routine? In order to this men must be aroused and engrossed. Religion must come forth from the inner sanctuary of her people's worship and bosoms, from the domain of her ordinances and her oracles, to declare her majesty more publicly, to awe and to strike the "untoward generation," which, under her less mighty appliances, thus perish within sight of her cross and her sanctuaries! How much greater things might come to pass, on the plainest principles of Christianity, than are commonly witnessed, or even thought of! How painfully obtrusive is the conviction of practical failure, when results and provisions are compared together! And, what is to bring about a recognised and joyful proportion between them? Surely not the tardy and feeble working of an average Christianity! How, and when, could the world be converted by such a process, when it does little more than suffice to keep its

life, intead of extending its conquests? The day of Pentecost is itself the perfect proof that what we call revival is nothing else than true primitiveism.

The dispensation opened on that great day, showed itself adequate to the wants of the world. It had a might and a speed in it that revealed its destiny, and its ample sufficiency to compass it. It was a full revelation of the peculiar glory of Christianity, as a spiritual power; a declaration of its nature, beyond what words or symbols could convey. It was a great initial fact in its economy, containing the law of its future operation, and the prognostic of its ultimate triumph. It showed *the measure*, and not the *nature only*, of the heavenly gift; a measure never to be diminished, any more than totally withdrawn, except in those features of it that may be regarded as merely secondary and accidental, however glorious. A dispensation of grace may well be supposed, either at its beginning or close, worthy of being signalized by extraordinary divine tokens; while its fulness is not impaired by a subsequnt withdrawment of them. These refer to something greater than themselves, yielding up their office, like extraordinary messengers of heaven, when their testimony has been sealed by infallible proofs, and the law of divine operation has been ascertained and settled among men. But no inferiority of dispensation is hence to be inferred. These are witnesses of a perpetual identity, appertaining to every future age, during which it abides in force. They vouch for its integrity, and the primitive history of its effects, till another, and higher order of events shall ensue, declaring its termination in the state of glorified existence.

If this view of the day of Pentecost be correct, it is to be regarded as a *precedent*, embodying a law of designed universality, in respect to the world. The outpouring of the Spirit "upon all flesh," was presaged in this event, to which the prophecy of Joel had respect. It was only then fulfilled in type, or example; it did not come up to the

breadth of its terms, much less exhaust the blessing conveyed by them. It could never be meant to restrict them to a particular age or people.

The "last days," mentioned as so illustrious in these displays of grace, assuredly cannot be limited to the primeval period. They include the entire series of ages to come, as these are all comprised in the range of the dispensation itself. This is, and must be, the great provision on which Christianity relies for its upholding and universality. This is its very life and glory; it has no other. Its outset demonstrated this, and was intended to form the views, and guide the efforts, of its people. Its very title, as "the kingdom of heaven," is pre-eminently vindicated by it. It is the one distinguishing ground of it, forasmuch as its existence and progress recognise no other than a spiritual agency. That agency is pre-eminently a *chartered* gift to the Church, and in no less measure than that which first revealed the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the assembly in the upper room. No reasons can be assigned why the gift should have been diminished, because it is plainly *Christianity itself, nothing accidental to, or separable from it.* In it lies its adaptation to the whole case of the world,—its whole strength, as a reign of grace. Its insufficiency is always seen, whenever this gift appears to be withdrawn. It is mutilated, caricatured, and advanced in cold and carnal recognition; but it is never really exhibited, or truly propagated, but by its own native force, its inherent spirit and life; that which, while it exalts its doctrines above all human theory and opinion, as coming immediately from God, shows, that its design and its operations are equally beyond the counsels and the power of man; and that, whatever forms, even of professed recognition, are either alien from, or antagonist to, this great truth, are but imposing and pernicious delusions.

As the gift of the Spirit comprises the whole executive agency of Christianity, it must be commensurate with its

whole design, and infinitely sufficient for it. But sovereignty is included in the gift; which implies the operation of a DIVINE AGENT, and which also regards, as the subject of its operations, the moral nature of man. It must in its bestowment respect the laws fundamental to a moral government, and incorporated with the remedial system itself. It may be reduced to an insensible degree by systematic resistance; it may be increased to the pitch of an all-converting efficacy, by the suit of the Church, and the yieldings of penitent minds to the authority of the word. His preliminary influences may be so cherished that his fullest gifts may follow, as proper moral awards. Prayer may bring down upon congregations, or masses, a stronger converting influence; may stimulate the conscience, enlighten the understanding, and suddenly raise up within the man the standard of revolt from the enemy, when his dominion seemed most absolute, and his prey most helpless. He may put forth a quiet, but strong hand upon society, like that of attraction or magnetism in nature, mysteriously biasing it to religion, and conveying a predisposition of mind for more decisive results. He avails himself of the social sympathies of men, as well as their more special affections, converting them into channels of influence, to pervade more thoroughly the public mind. In His hand all instruments are powerful, all events impressive, all human appliances divine ordinances, teeming with efficacy, as the snow and rain falling from heaven.

Looking, then, at the anticipations of prophecy respecting Christianity, at its facts, doctrines, and economy; with their relations to all that preceded, or may be supposed to follow it; and looking, too, at the Pentecostal day as the full enunciation of its power, the prognostic of the future, and exemplar of a judgment on the Evil One, no surprise should be felt that similar demonstrations should break forth successively in the midst of the Church, and before the eyes of the world; nor should a lurking suspicion be

indulged, that some *ulterior* and very different manifestation of God must evene, to supplement the reign of the Spirit on the earth. This expectation is of itself a proof of an effete and dwarfish Christianity: its true power is not only concealed, it is lost; while apathy and unbelief restrain the true evangelical "coming of the Son of man" to the world. The marvel should rather be, that so little is looked for from existing provisions, viewed in connexion with the manifest abeyance of divine interpositions in any other form than this. This looks like *finality* of dispensational arrangement, as that of creation; and for the same reason—that each was from the beginning perfect. What is simply material and instrumental, is unprogressive; while the true power of Christianity lies in the illimitable measure of the *agency* that upholds it. Its very conditionality, while it accounts for its comparative absence at any time and place, shows that its most reserved resources are not beyond the reach of prayer; that God rather waits for man than man for God; and that this inversion of God's own rule, is the only cause of his withholding blessing.

The gift of the Spirit, and the condition of religion in the world, are facts which cannot be harmonized but by the admission of an intermediate and contingent cause, actually determinative of results. The plenary consignment of the gift, from the date of Christianity itself, cannot consist with the recognition of a sovereignty, whose prevailing ordinance is *withholding;* and whose prerogatives lie beyond the reach of the very nature, for the aid and restoration of which it was originated. It is manifest that the age of mere promise respecting this agency, expired with the pentecostal hour. Hence, the ages successive to it must not be viewed as the continuity of promise, but the extension of fulfilment. The gift, being dispensational, is immutable and universal, an unsealed fountain of life to all ages and people, gushing from the mediatorial throne; and answering to the utmost need and extent of our race.

Revival is, then, if dispensationally regarded, not properly an extraordinary and very occasional phenomenon, but rather—under certain modifications—the *full* manifestation of the kingdom of Christ; not, indeed, as that kingdom may, in any instance, barely exist, but as it is in full accordance with the work and attributes of its Head. Revival, also, whether particular or general, implies a lapse and depression in respect to a first and normal condition of the Church. It is the recovery of something *lost*, not the reception of something *new*. Revivals are repetitions and re-assurances of pentecostal glory,—glimpses of that grand primeval sun, so long and so thickly overcast. They are revelations of the degeneracy of Christendom, which have escaped every historian of its affairs, and which no human demonstrations can make impressive to us. They show us how every age and church have, in their style of thought and feeling on this great subject, gone astray from the divine MODEL, which sprang forth on the birthday of Christianity, when the new man was created. They make us to understand, and the world to confess, that the ordinary state of Christianity, is not its necessary, or even its natural one; and that when awoke, it is indeed "the arm" and "the glory of the Lord." We are then made to feel, that its future progress is not be measured by the past; nor the *actual* and *possible* of its condition to be confounded. The future which brightened to the eye of prophecy unto the perfect day, we regard but as the development of its dispensational resources TEMPORALLY REPRESSED, not FINALLY WITHDRAWN; and all the surer in prospect, because so obviously kept back until now. Our assurances of advance, founded on the doctrine of prophecy, on dispensational analogy, and the order of divine manifestation, are, as the progress of an argument, from the less to the greater. We apply not our *experience*, but our *faith*, to what is still to come; which, in this respect, is as anticipative as was that of the Church before the Advent. The

reign of the Spirit on earth, is as positive a promise for the future, as was the coming of Christ for the past; and is the proper correlative and consequence of it.

To this, which may be termed "the present truth," the mind of the Church must, and will be, more engrossingly turned. Genuine revivals are the want of the times; the tendencies of which are to explain away, or to depreciate the most positive and peculiar dogmas of Revelation, to exaggerate the powers of man, and to put further and further away from the mind, the idea both of the stated and extraordinary agency of God upon the world. Under the aspects of such facts as these, the doctrine of the Spirit's agency in the creation and maintenance of religion, cannot be too strongly advanced, or too urgently applied.

Not only should all honour be rendered to the Holy Spirit, on account of the necessity and excellency of his gifts, but of his Divinity also. His office, and His person, should command our deepest veneration and gratitude; nor should we be more solemnly warned, not to grieve Him by anti-christian tempers and habits, than by our neglects in seeking, with due earnestness and faith, His most plenteous promised impartations, or by our disparaging talk or behaviour, respecting His most favourite work. To determine the *mode* of His operations, which, by the Lord himself, are compared to the wind, blowing "where it listeth;" to prescribe to Him, of whom it is wonderingly inquired, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord?"—what shall be the manner of his visitation in the Church; what instruments he shall use, or effects he shall produce,—are grievous offences against his wisdom and love; and are visited with an impotency and sterility, on the best adapted agencies, which all may deplore, but none remove.

Of all the constituents of Christianity, the presence of the vital power in its utmost force, is essential to its progress. The abundant life, is alike demanded for the perfection, and the widening of its work. To no other power in earth or

heaven, will the combined influences of human and Satanic enmity yield. Judgments and mercies, however blended, or however varied, whether in manner or degree, produce no lasting effect upon the heart, if the Spirit's grace be withheld. The improvements rife in society, the advance of religious knowledge, and the application of superior skill in training the infant mind; the multiplication of church agencies, and methods of church industry, together with the exertions of the most gifted ministry, will do little to improve the tone, or extend the dominion of the religion of our age, without an enlarged measure of the Spirit's visitations. The wilderness will never "become a fruitful field," while the hand of man is chiefly employed in its transformation. It still bears plentifully the brier, and the thorn; at best yielding but a scanty harvest to the lap of the labourer, until He be poured out upon it, who is HIMSELF the blessing—comprising all the actual, and the possible of good—to the church and the world. He, when thus nigh, renders every instrument competent to his work; while, in some instances, He supersedes them; dealing with men, Himself, without the intervention of thier fellows; or compelling them to seek that help, which in every other case they would have spurned.

The first Christian Church that graced the world, was the immediate product of a power immensely greater than that which Christians ordinarily regard, as necessary to maintain some tolerable footing in society. Its existence, and its strength, were almost matters of a day, rapid as the growth of the gourd, majestic as the cedars of Lebanon. Thus gigantic in its birth, its progress was but the development of its proportions; its labours but the very play of its might. Its action was quick, because strong; its spread was the consequence of its vigour, not of mere circumstantial aids. Thus it was, that it overcame the world; nor can it be doubted, that such a power would again achieve the like, if the Church would again put on *this* as her strength.

Other associations of men may derive power from new and unexpected turns of the times—from the growth of particular opinions and sympathies, and an order of striking events. For every conceivable type of social, political, and even religious movement, human nature itself affords infinite scope; but *the Church is shut up to one power only, for its advancement in the world.* This is not inherent, but derived; not without, or around it, but from above.

The one great basis of all revealed religion, is Divine power. This may be traced downward through its whole history. It is affirmed in every form of speech, and illustrated by facts of surpassing interest, in both Testaments. It stands before us, arrayed in the glory of every miracle, and is the one oracle of all divine testimony. Christ himself is "the arm of the Lord." Prayer, also, as a New Testament ordinance, is the proper counterpart of this truth; while the gift of the Spirit is the one fact and doctrine, answering to it all. It expounds and conveys the whole divine might, invested in the kingdom of grace. As in every department of exertion where man only is concerned, all the difference between failure and success may, in general, be ascribed to the character of his plans, the selection of its means, and his management of the agencies employed to carry them out; so it is equally evident, that, in a system which admits man only as an instrument, and God as the only agent, by whom everything is done, that is done aright, success or failure must turn on the event, or the denial of His concurrence. In this view it is that our Lord's words convey to us so pregnant a truth, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Subordinate causes must be ranged in their own order, so as not to supersede, but to convey the energy of the First. Thus, they are at once tested and perfected. Their value is seen in their results, and not in their adaptations only; else they stand rather as symbols of truth, than as its living organs. They become channels voided by the

stream,—disused instruments; disused because unsuitable to their Maker's purpose. The highest honour which can appertain to any instrument, or system of means, is, that God is pleased to *appropriate* it, by manifestation of His agency through it, and by the effects following it, when it is put in motion; and this honour is to be measured, by the *degree* in which these results are made apparent.

But this position does not imply that the divine sanction is appended to unscriptural principles, or unholy agencies detected in the work of revival. These tend to damage, and even to destroy it, but do not offer positive disproof of its genuineness. There may be much that is purely human, and yet something truly divine, even in phenomena by no means unexceptionable. Our Lord's test, "by their fruits ye shall know them," is as applicable to things as to persons. The work is less to be judged of by its *instruments*, than by its effects. God is not pledged to men or measures, though the results are, more or less, manifestly his own. He deals with *individual minds* only, in the great affair of their salvation; not with the instruments, or the accidents, which may have been concerned to bring this about. It is their *sincerity, repentance, faith, to which the great Heart-searcher has respect, where He bestows his blessing;* not to the inducing agencies of these dispositions and acts. It is no proof of superior holiness, or even average piety, that signs follow the ministry of individuals, any more than the primitive gifts were proofs of eminent sanctity in their possessors, or even of piety at all. *Endowments* must not be confounded with *graces;* nor the special adaptation of gifts, to influence masses powerfully for their good, with the virtues which commend us to God. They by no means imply a correspondence with each other in degree, or even a necessary co-existence at all.

This fact is not, however, to be pleaded in disparagement of high personal holiness, as a condition to the *full* and *lasting* effect of public gifts in the service of the Church;

but it is important to adduce it, to vindicate the genuineness of a work—when the measures and agencies employed in its behalf, are not faultless—from sweeping condemnation; and to abate the dangerous and almost idolatrous regards in the popular mind, which arise from this mistaken identity between *personal* and *public* qualities. It is still more important to keep in mind this distinction, when it is considered that it not only disposes us to judge more tenderly of a class of revivals, in some respects unduly humanized, but to form more correct opinions of what revivals ought to be. They should not be viewed as an occasional, and a somewhat extraneous element,—a force *applied* to the Church, instead of one *springing out* of it. They should not be put in the same relation to the Church as the physician's art is to a patient,—a devised antagonism to disturbances, or decay in nature: they should be outgoings of the fulness of the Church; the redundancy of its life in teeming multiplicity, by the unrestrained descent of blessing from above; and by an order of progression, like that of general nature, fixed in its ordinances, but varying in their application,—one while imperceptibly slow, at another, in throes, and bursts, revealing its life, and accelerating its work; one while, scanty in products, then loading us with its hundredfold bounty, ever sovereign, yet ever constant.

Thus should the work of the Lord be traced in his Church. It should be *nature* still; a deep principle of life ever swelling from within, and boundlessly expansive. If it be not this, it is more an accident than an essence,—not real, but fictitious. It is a low and offensive species of *externalism;* the more unseemly as it eschews every form in which nature itself testifies a religious reverence, and the more dangerous, because licensing the utmost riot of the passions, by an imaginary union with the spiritual. The office of judgment in religious movements is not to stimulate, but to repress the emotions; to adjust and regulate to the sober and the solemn, what of itself tends to engender a wild fanaticism.

The true element of religion is midway between this and stoicism. It is mind mightily stirred, but not merely, or even chiefly, in its secondary faculties. The heart-pricking preparatory to the sudden conversion of the multitudes on the day of Pentecost, certainly signifies the effect of the conviction that was darted into them, as an arrow into the deer, or goad into the ox. The apostolic weapon which pierced the conscience, and wrung the soul, was simply "*the truth.*" The seat of conviction must be the conscience, not the passions; and CONVICTION must ever be the fundamental work of the Spirit, if *law* be fundamental to religion, and condemnation to the "ministration of righteousness." Where this is lacking, the agency of the Spirit must be denied. Excitement is a counterfeit, and the whole affair but satanic mimicry—a miserable playing off by the Tempter on human weakness; the obvious design of which is to delude souls, and to bring religion into contempt. To guard against these disasters, revivals should be connatural with the Church, not imported from afar,—self-motive, self-accretive products. Every church should afford scope for them, should work for them, and should expect them; not as *new*, or even *rare* things; not as certain loose appendages, but as so thoroughly constituent facts, and legitimate results of evangelic principles and actings, that they should be known by some other name, than one which implies both blame and reproach. If otherwise viewed and sought, then is their legitimacy doubtful, their workings exceptionable, and their effects as short-lived as they are often positively injurious.

This preternatural tension of humanity, is not followed by a healthful tranquillity, as is the case in social changes; but by *exhaustion*, from which recovery is slow, and often distant. The moral staple on which religion depends as its basis and material, is sadly attenuated and depraved. A frozen indifference, if not an unconquerable antipathy, to its most precious and hallowing influences, succeeds in minds

that have been subjected to, and abused by, this spiritual quackery. Ordinances are abandoned, the ministry despised, and even the truth itself loathed, except presented in its most elementary form; or in quantity, such as may be comprised in a few trite and favourite propositions; or so far as it may awaken the imagination, or give fresh impulse to the passions, instead of shining in full-orbed radiance, shedding a firmamental glory upon the inner man, wholly transforming, because wholly revealing its power.

In advocating and conducting what, in distinction from the ordinary course of religious action, are termed revivals, the utmost care is requisite never to swerve in the slightest degree, either from the *authority* or the *sobriety* of truth; from a Scriptural simplicity in the measures employed, or the decorum which public feeling, but especially *religion itself*, demands. Everything like guile or artifice must be laid aside, no less than the hypocrisy and deceit which inspiration so sternly proscribes. All attempts at wonder-working, or a Balaam-like seeking enchantments, are revolting to true piety, and insults offered to the majesty and condescension of "the Spirit of grace." Pious frauds and legerdemain, however disguised, or however successful, cannot be innocently brought into co-operation with the Spirit of truth; or coalesce with the most holy of all holy works—that of saving souls. Earnestness must flow from *integrity*, and be strongly impregnated with it. Principles must not be cast away in a wild chase after effects. Holy work must be holily done; and though infirmity and mistake cannot be entirely excluded from the best efforts of man to promote the work of God, his *vices* must have as little to do with it, as Belial has with Christ. Every infraction of godly rules is penally visited; whether in the public degradation of the agents concerned in it, or the vapid, characterless, Antinomian plight, into which every community of professors sinks which grasps at influence,

at the expense of principle; or which, by construction, if not intention, does "evil that good may come."

These animadversions on certain modes of proceeding—which, if not deserving unqualified condemnation, as bad in principle, are severely censurable for their eccentricity—must not be strained further than the line which bounds extravagance from zeal; or a dishallowing, mischievous expediency, from the vigorous actings of a deep conviction. Influenced by the fear and the disgust which bastard examples raise in minds duly enlightened, and jealous for the honour of religion, the heart of the Church may, to its own damage, and the offending of the Holy Spirit, become cold and alien with regard to that which pre-eminently claims to be "the work of the Lord." Offence justly taken at exceptionable doings, or the habit of depreciating results, induces a settled repugnance to every kind and degree of action in the Church, which, in the best sense of the word, may be called *a stir*, such as Christianity began with, which is necessary to keep it before, and to get it into, the public mind; such a momentum, in fact, as equally denotes health in the Church, and insures its extension in the world; and without which, the prospects of its ultimate dominion may well be deemed visionary. This condition of feeling, if it become general, is more than an evidence of mistaken judgment; it is a demonstration of *lukewarmness*, especially in those communities where other views and practices have prevailed. Such a change must argue, that they have taken a new and lower key, one which augurs ill for the future, as it is the knell of a departed brighter age. If the facts, and the expectation of revivals, be lost to the Church, the belief of the doctrine sinks to a mere *negation*, even with those who seem to cling to it most fondly. Like the higher gifts and degrees of personal religion, it melts away and disappears, as some gloriously coloured cloud; or, rather, as the glory seen by the prophet to go up "from the threshold of the house."

Churches, as well as individuals, have the anointing of the Holy One, in a sense appropriate to each—an amissible gift, which, when not totally forfeited, may be so far retracted and impaired, in respect to *public* as well as personal efficiency, that it can no longer be affirmed that they "know all things," much less do them. The measure of practical knowledge is greatly diminished, the degree of working ability still more so. A carnal prudence is substituted for heavenly wisdom; and a feeble, halting motion for the omnipotent action of faith and love. The tendencies of the present age, are not such as to require special rules, or additional safeguards, for the avoidance of dangerous excesses in religious action. We are more in danger of sinking into a lifeless formalism, than of being injured by a ranting enthusiasm. It is not from excess, but from defect, that the interests of religion are likely, at present, to suffer. The spirit which occasioned the apostles on the day of Pentecost to be mistaken for drunkards, and St. Paul, by Festus, for a madman, is far less a striking characteristic with us, than one, which if it be not of the world, too closely resembles it, and discovers little of that antagonism, in which the true character and power of Christianity consists. The churches in which no revivals of religion take place, either occupy the *highest* or the *lowest* point of the scale within which Church existence ranges. If the former, their life is too full and fresh to allow the term *revival* to bear any significant application to them. If the latter, it is almost too low to be capable of reaction, but by Him to whom "all things are possible." If this observation be true, then these phenomena are signs of a Church life, more or less advanced towards the dispensational perfection of Christianity—the perfection of Pentecost. Their life, indeed, may be a somewhat depressed and arrested force; like a river, at intervals absorbed in its course by the sand-drifts, buried in the bosom of the desert, yet here and there arising as from its tomb, to reveal its power; and even

when not visible on the surface, in the full flow of its waters, planting thickly the witnesses of its vitality in meads, trees, and flowers, springing up in plenteousness, beauty, and strength.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

"And so it is as to the world. The great design of God is to rescue it from falsehood, and sin, and Satan, and to set upon it the crown of glory and purity. And to this, however, everything is made to move."—RICHARD WATSON.

"By speaking we move man,—by prayer we move God. The prayer of faith is the only power in the universe to which the great Jehovah yields: he looks upon every other power as more or less opposed to him."—ROBERT HALL.

"IN wrath remember mercy." This brief petition is full and profound. It declares the whole mind of God towards the world. It is the basis of revelation, as it is antecedent to it, in the character of the Supreme Ruler, and his relations to mankind. By wrath, we understand the principle, and the manifestations of penal justice, fully answerable to a sovereign holiness, bent upon upholding law, and every interest of which law must be the guardian. By mercy, we understand all measures, and acts of indulgence, issuing from the same Power, and declaring his love to the creature, though sinful; and, with a view to ulterior purposes, both of justice and grace. These principles of divine government appear to militate with each other; but they are perfectly harmonized by the sublime discoveries of redemption. This involves their co-existence in the mind of God, and explains the otherwise most anomalous fact of their coalition, in the actual system of Divine Providence over the world, which, in its unvarying and most distinctive features, reiterates it; but is silent on the *doctrine* implied in it, re-

ferring us to the one oracle of revelation, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The *facts*, then, are in nature; the *philosophy* of them descends from another source.

Redemption, by atonement, is the one doctrine which connects heaven and earth beneficently, and the light which makes this connexion manifest. It is a cause, all-sufficient for every effect we either experience or witness; and, therefore, by a just and familiar rule of philosophizing, no other is to be sought for; or, if seemingly otherwise, the defect is in our ability to trace and apply it, not in the insufficiency of the truth itself. The CROSS is the only key to the facts and the history of our race. Taken doctrinally, it is the original union of justice and mercy, the glory of which is reflected over the world, and diffused over the entire roll of inspiration. It explains the mitigation of judgment on the primeval offence. It elucidates every fact in the moral nature of man, from that day to this, together with every *physical* aspect of it.

Life and death, good and evil, happiness and suffering, every circumstance, interest, and action of humanity, show but two principles in inseparable combination—wrath and mercy, neither of them forgotten, but mercy unfailingly remembered. Justice often seems to slumber, and the dues of crime not to be exacted. It is intermittent, slow, partial in its visitations; but mercy is ever vigilant, and rich in benefactions, as if the mother and nurse of the race. These two principles have overlooked and pervaded all ages, lands, and people. The traces of their sovereignty are nowhere lacking. Their monumental pillars are venerable as the mountains; their inscriptions, written in every character devised, or language spoken, since Babel's confusion, or the day when man was created. They were not effaced, but renewed, by the flood. They have been deepened by the hand of time, and multiplied with the generations of men.

Desolation and renewal mark the course of the world through all ages. The destructive and the vital powers

are ever co-extant. The vegetable and animal kingdoms are overcast with the shadow of these higher truths. Nations, communities, families, and individuals, are alike subject to the sway of these omnipotent principles. Yet the mild, the benignant, the good-creating, is always uppermost; for, if mercy be remembered, even when wrath is kindled, its *supremacy* is strongly declared. That which rules even a human being, in moments of provocation,—reigning in the temptation to vengeance,—must be the most powerful disposition of his nature, and the law that forms his character.

The prayer is not merely cognizant of great fundamental doctrines, alike exponent of all facts, and of revelation itself; it is especially deprecatory of the *utmost* vengeance in Him to whom it "belongeth," even when extreme measures may be loudly demanded. Its application to the condition and prospects of the prophet's own people has been already noticed. It may be added, that to them the prayer bears an unique reference; strengthening to our faith, in its more general bearing, and deepening our conviction of its own inspiration. It contemplates that nation as, in some sense, the most signal example of divine retribution on record; its denationalization, and deprivation of covenant honours, being a far more impressive instance of judgment, than the *annihilation* of any people by the ordinary methods of Divine Providence. To them mercy is the retrieving power, as it cannot be to nations already defunct, whose name and glory remain to us in history alone. The phrase, "remember mercy," does not merely include a reference to the general doctrines before noticed, but to the special engagements of God to the forefathers of the Jews, so powerfully pleaded by Moses, in that most fearful crisis, when God said that he would consume them in a moment. Prayer is, therefore, a covenant plea for the mercy, and the oath to their fathers, to be fulfilled to their children; though the time should be long, and the vision should tarry, and the sight of the bones

in the valley, "many," and "very dry," should constrain the cry of despair,—"Our hope is cut off!"

This prayer, however, includes every possible case that humanity can furnish. It implies such a patriotism, and such a philanthropy, as forbid the man of God to contemplate, without distressing emotion, the impending judgments of God upon any nation, or individual man, in the world: his is not the temper of the stoic, or the fatalist—the double personification of blasphemy and selfishness. Though severely righteous, it is generous and sympathizing. It tends almost to depreciate to a man his own personal safety, while he sees others exposed to destruction; and to exult more in a single trophy of mercy, than in a thousand holocausts to justice. Thus said Moses: "If Thou wilt blot out their sin; if not, blot my name out of the book that thou hast written." Thus Paul, also: "I could wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren's sake."

There is, doubtless, a holy glorying in the work of judgment: but this is chiefly reserved for that season when His judgments shall be "made manifest;" so strongly illuminated by the proceedings of the great day, that it shall be seen that no place was left for the prerogative of mercy; and that all the *possible* of its prerogatives having been precluded, by the abuse of the season given men for repentance, the inevitable alternative became the more glorious, as its infliction was the longer delayed.

It is a prayer for a benevolent issue of the work of judgment. It embodies the wisdom which God only can teach: that mercy is both the policy and the fruit of his judgments on the world; that punishment itself is but a subordinate end in his administration, and wasting visitations, but the pioneer measures of his salvation. In respect to the prophet's own people, this fact will hereafter become strikingly apparent; the heavy judgments so long resting upon them, being destined to *abide*, till conviction of sin shall issue, and penitence prepare the way for their re-

moval. This is also the counsel of God toward all offending nations: his judgments are reproofs and corrections, administered at intervals, and with more or less severity, so long as their probationary condition lasts. Hence the judgment, which in any case *excludes* mercy, is not only vindicatory of every previous one in the series, but descends in a character entirely distinct from them; as the "seven angels, having the seven last plagues," because in them the measure of God's wrath is filled up. Thus the prayer is verified in its answer, as well as in its doctrine. By the general course of Providence, judgments have been far more marked by the beneficence of their results, than by the miseries they have inflicted. In the latter respect they have been transient; in the former, permanent: in the one respect, partial; in the other, general; like the free gift, abounding over the offence. They have been most wonderfully overruled, to the amelioration and progress of our race; removing obstacles to the career of improvement, and enforcing lessons on mankind, which could have been furnished by no other kind of discipline. The proofs and illustrations of this doctrine may be plentifully gathered from the history of our own country and of Europe, during centuries past; while the intimations of similar issues, from late, and still impending events, are to some extent so distinct, that "he may run who reads them."

But our views would be unwarrantably limited, if the *external* effects of divine judgments were alone considered. The wrath which, as a judicial principle, inflicts what is meet for the upholding of the claims of the Supreme Ruler, has an *internal* sphere of action, as well as an outward one. It alights on men's hearts; not merely on their estates, or their persons. It not only creates earthquakes, which overturn thrones, and fill nations with convulsion and dismay; but smites with obduracy and perverseness, as it did Pharaoh, Amalek, and other enemies of His people; or yet more signally, that apostate nation itself. The most ap-

palling judgments which the Apocalypse opens on earth, are those in which the plagues God sends upon men are so vividly related, coupled with the oft-repeated notice of their persevering wickedness and impenitency. They are slain by the horsemen, stung with scorpions, scorched with fire, and agonized by sore diseases; but still they "blaspheme the God of heaven, which had power over these plagues," and "repented not to give Him glory." It is a matter of sore lamentation and of fearful portent, when the words of a prophet declare truly the *event* of a judgment. "The people turneth not to him that smiteth them; neither do they seek the Lord," when the stroke of his sword, descending from heaven, slays the flesh, but rebounds from the soul, encased as in the armour of hell. What can this portend but another and more crushing blow from the same Almighty hand? or the respite, should it follow, but a still more dreadful curse—a momentary truce, during which vengeance slumbers not, but presages, like the lulled winds, a ruinous onslaught, which neither intercessions nor wailings can assuage?

The mercy of God is identic with the revival of his work. It has been before remarked, that the term mercy bears more than a general signification; that it particularly includes God's *covenant* favours. In the words of God to Moses, as quoted by St. Paul, the connexion shows that it meant more than the forgiveness of sin,—even a restoration of the high privileges which had been just before forfeited, and for which Moses so urgently interceded. "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." This, too, is the sense which St. Paul puts upon them in the before-mentioned quotation, referring them to the *gospel* covenant, from which the Jews, on account of their unbelief, were about to be shut out, and the Gentiles elected in their stead. The mercy of God, pre-eminently, is the gospel; with its gracious privileges, its great salvation, its Church economy, its

"kingdom of heaven." This "mercy" is chartered to the world; it is everlasting and universal. It is the fulness of all mercy from God, as it is the record of redemption, the history and mystery of the cross, the throne of the Mediator, and the advent of the Holy Spirit to the world. Of this mercy, the Church is the seat and executive. It is mercy's temple and treasure-house, in which are stored up the true riches; the Bethesda, not for a nation or a city, but the whole world. The Church is the visible and covenant embodiment of mercy, the guardian and gospeller of truth, by Christ's authority, and for his name and glory, in the conversion of all nations. It has ever pleased God to institute *human* mediums of manifestation, to employ human example, teaching, and agency, to carry out his counsels. These he never lays aside, though occasionally superseded, or varied in their form and application. He has reformed them whenever they have become corrupt; or remodelled them when the condition of the world, and the progress of his plans, demanded such interposition. The mercy for which the prayer is offered, is most eminently the gospel covenant, held and expounded by the Christian Church. The existence of it is the one great testimony of God to the world, of his unfailing mercy toward it; for so long as the gospel, and the commission to preach it, continue, the dispensation of universal grace must abide in full force. The presence of His WORD ALONE, would determine this all-important fact; though it should, as in the case of the law, diminish to a single known and authenticated copy; or not so many as twelve men, as in the beginning, were found to publish it. Its solitary existence would bind the world to God, by his own truth and grace. It could not *perish*, so long as the great warrant and text of its amnesty was uncancelled by some direct interposition of God himself.

The Church records and testifies this fact, by its own existence and functions, from age to age. It is "the pillar

and ground of the truth," lifting it up as a beacon upon the mountain top, and expounding the charter of the world's being, as in mid heaven, by divine command. God, therefore, remembers mercy, when he preserves His Church, as he did the ark, ere the waters were assuaged; He puts his bow in the clouds, when he publicly verifies his own words, "Upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." That land from which the Church is banished, or the people who refuse to welcome her word of peace and reign of heaven, is doomed to wrath. God's mercy is bound up in his Gospel and his Church; and his plagues range freely, as did the angel of death through Egypt, where this altar is not reared. To remove the candlestick is to withdraw the "mercy," which casts a living radiance over the entire sphere of human weal. The charter of the highest blessings is forfeited to human ingratitude and faithlessness; while judgment is as necessarily an alternative, as is darkness when daylight is withdrawn.

Hence, the highest mercy visits a land when the Christian institute is preserved. It includes every other; it is the pledge of all good; it bears up the pillars of the state, and provides a remedy for all social mischiefs. It is the one all-sovereign condition of public, family, and personal happiness. *Every* interest is redeemable, if the Church be not lost. There is a foundation yet extant, on which all may be rebuilt, and the old wastes, in prophetic phrase, repaired, "the desolations of many generations." The all-renewing breath may thence go forth over the whole field of social ruin; and Jerusalem become, in respect to the transformations that have passed on all around her, a "new heaven, and a new earth."

But, if to possess the Church be the true weal of men, how much more her purification and enlargement? The mercy to be desired, doubtless comprises all the covenant resources pertaining to "the last days;" which shall gar-

nish and amplify the Church, till she corresponds fully with the visions of prophecy, and her New Testament image—"the bride, the Lamb's wife." How rich and effectual is the mercy which heals the disease and the breaches of Zion! which anoints her ministers, and fills her saints with gladness! which so blesses her provision, as to "satisfy her poor with bread!" which multiplies her people like a flock, and causes them to spring up, "as willows by the water-courses!" which renders them countless as the sands, and bright as the dew! which so teems with fecundity, that the barren sings "which did not bear," and the shame of divorce is recompensed in hosts of spiritual progeny! This is the mercy which the Church and the world ever call for; it crowns every indulgence from the righteous, but pacified, Sovereign of heaven and earth. It is an element of unmixed universal beneficence; it is, what the angelic choir rapturously sung over the plains of Bethlehem—"good will toward men;" it is goodness—"love"—in the choicest expressions of its favour,—its own healing wings spread over a land; its gifts are all "perfect," as well as "good," —without drawback, or limitation. They are not contingent in their properties and effects, as other things are. Their immutable adaptation to bless mankind, arises equally from the Divine nature and the human, and their relations to each other. They express all primary and necessary truth; they are revelations of existing relations, government, ends. They bind the present and the ultimate together; they provide for all subordinate interests, and the details of life, by grand constitutions of wise and benevolent action.

Every principle and ordinance of religion bears towards one result—the restoration of its own supremacy over man. To provide for, and to accomplish this, are the whole wealth and policy of Divine mercy exercised. All measures of amelioration anticipate this, or are contingent on it. The *external* regime over men supposes the *internal*; it is but

the shadow of this sun, which, rounding the dial of the world's existence, insures a growing brightness to its hours. The mercy which is personally saving, is the summary of all mercy to the world; it is its full exposition, its highest exercise, its crowning benefit. To this it travels, and in this it rests. Its dominion in individuals is its highest sovereignty over the whole world; it is comparatively powerless beyond the province of man's spiritual nature. Its proper social and national effects issue from this first and deepest action of its power, and are limited by it. This bears a relation to other things, similar to that of the great First Cause to material nature; it is Divinity, in the moral world all-pervading as in the physical.

Christianity, as the reign of God, must be a perfect constitution for all human interests. The course of the world, and the moral tendencies of human nature, have maintained a fruitless, but most instructive war against this truth. The human rule is opposed to the divine; the wisdom and sufficiency of the creature to the provisions of Omnipotent Love. Such is the gist of all past and impending controversies between man and his Maker; and is the doctrine pressed upon him, by the workings of his nature, in every shift and modification of it, through the many centuries of the past. From its true weal, the mind of the world, just as that of individuals, instinctively diverges. The great social problem, about which every order of mind, in the climacteric march of centuries, has been engrossed, is sought to be wrought out without the aid of the Divine counsel, and in *opposition* to it. This is the frowardness, which ever has been, and still is, "judicially carried headlong." Men begin where their predecessors left off; they discard the testimony of experience, and are blind to the facts of history. Summoning their powers anew to the task, they bring all the treasures of discovery to their aid; they reason and experiment confidently, they revel in the paradise of hope, yet the world remains as it was. It

cannot advance, but by *moral remedies;* and these are all in the custody of *religion,* which is neglected and despised. Nor does it seem a likelihood, that the wisdom of confessing the error, and of earnestly seeking the guidance of better principles, will ever arise from this source.

Self-conviction is just as little an inherent power in those who enshrine the idol of self-government, as in those who advocate despotic sway. The great remedy is as foreign to the world, in the Scriptural sense of that word, as the Gospel grace is to our common nature. It does not arise *out of it,* but is brought *into it.* Another, and a superior system to the social one, must be set up, which shall be the seat of the rectifying principle, and invested with a powerfully aggressive action.

Such is the evangelic method of national and social regeneration. It is God's mercy in Christ, conveyed through his Church, as its covenanted repository, and prescribed executive. The Church is not to be brought down to the level of the world, but the world brought up to the level of the Church; and thus the new and heavenly society is *normal* to the whole; its spirit is to pass into it, and its laws made to actuate it. In order to this, the perfect integrity of the intermedial economy is necessary; the undivided fulness of its resources, with corresponding degrees of divine blessing. It is the *mercy* implied in great evangelical operations; in outpourings of the Spirit, followed by vast accessions of saved persons to the Church. *This* mercy is the fullest development of the divine prerogative upon the face of the world, not its mere provisional discovery; it includes *effects* chiefly; just as "wrath," whose power is declared in visitations of sweeping desolation. Mercy is remembered when it is most evangelically active: its *creations* make its power known: its witnesses are the happy myriads whom it ushers into the joys of spiritual life, and stamps with the characters of purity, lowliness, and love; the talents which it consecrates, and the services which it constrains. It is omnipo-

tent in its healing virtue, and in the production of every form of good. It not only expels the demons that afflict the world, but removes the disabilities of our nature to its proper exercises and enjoyments. It awakens every sympathy of the heart to beauty and goodness—to the love of truth and justice, and brings out the highest demonstration of that suggestive saying of the Psalms—"He fashioneth their hearts alike." One bosom is made to reflect the soul of a commonwealth, as the eye does the image of surrounding nature. The mind which by introversion scans itself, traverses with equal facility those of its fellows. Mercy opens human hearts to each other, wherever itself has been admitted; it removes all barriers, and rends away every veil. It brings open vision; it refines and commingles human spirits. It perfects family union, adds a new bond to society in general, and to man with man. It destroys suspicion, as well as malice. It harmonizes self-interest with universal duty; particular claims, with the largest obligations of philanthropy. It is, indeed, a rich and sovereign grace, such as revelation alone could assure us of, which still holds in store for the world greater blessings than it has hitherto conferred, when fresh bursts of vengeance threaten it; and there are still stronger reasons to dread such visitations, than are even the notices of their approach.

What glorious views of divine clemency must inspiration have cast about the minds of seers, and apostles, in succession, when, in their convictions, no judgments, either impending or future, would efface its vestiges from the government of the world, or, so much as *diminish* the beneficence of its sway! They all ever descried mercy, when the thundercloud was blackest, and the blast of trumpets, and the array of prodigies, were most astounding. They could still look onward to the expended forces of judgment, and to the fulfilment of all its dire omens, without dismay. They could look above the sky, overlaid with clouds, enkindled with the blaze of meteors, or the lightning's fiery shafts, to

the habitation of judgment, as to the throne of mercy also, whence every ordinance of good and evil issue, and every ministry, made to comport with the final reign of redeeming love. And this vision becomes more vivid and commanding as ages roll on, and the shifting scenes of the world's drama bear the outlines of the divine government out into greater clearness; and the last element, in its administration, becomes redundant, in the spread of the religion of Christ.

The Church is warranted in cherishing a deeper interest in the course of the world than the rest of mankind; and to expect events bearing on its destiny more strikingly correspondent with the descriptions of prophecy, as well as with the greatness of its doctrine and design. Faith and patience are not at all incompatible; nor, protraction and mystery, in the struggle going on in the world, with the certainty and glory of the issue. Both wrath and mercy may reveal their mightiest resources, to cut short the work; and a single century may be made to yield the consummation of many long and dreary epochs.

CHAPTER XII.

PRAYER AND ITS PRESAGES.

"Of what supreme almighty power
Is Thy great arm, which spans the east and west,
And tacks the centre to the sphere!
By it do all things live their measured hour:
We cannot ask the thing, which is not there,
Blaming the shallowness of our request."—HERBERT.

"Faith looks into the secret cabinet
Of God's eternal counsels, and doth see
Such mysteries of glory there, as set
Believing hearts on longing, till they be
Transform'd to the same image, and appear
So alter'd, as if themselves were there."—HERBERT.

THE doctrine of prayer is ever presented to us, in a powerful and practical manner; and may be viewed as no mean summary of the revelation which contains it. It is an ordinance which chiefly finds a place where an economy exists *midway* between innocency and unmixed retribution; the perfect reign of love, and the unmitigated severity of vengeance. The *final* states of being are those, in which righteousness obtains its crown, and wickedness its full measure of penal woe. Then the decisions of the great Ruler are absolute and unalterable. Not only is the character of the agent perfectly developed, but the relation he bears to the plan of a moral administration is necessarily an ultimate one. It is in the *primary* stage of being, and its correlated probationary condition, that contingency ranges, and alternatives are pendent. Probationary innocency could not shut out prayer, though it could not assume a deprecatory tone, nor make its suit to *mercy*. It would be rather the homage of a dependent nature, offered to the sovereign and all-sufficient One; the receptive, to the infinitely full and communicable Being; the aspiration of

infantine greatness, after its native aliment, its highest good. It might proceed from the yearnings of a very expansive nature, after the hidden, and the higher glories of Deity, felt to be reachable by no law of existence; or that this should be itself the law of attainment. Or, it might be combined with a felt necessity for superadded strength, to repel evil, and to perfect its own virtue, by a faultless fulfilment of the conditions on which its destiny hinged.

But prayer is, and must be, to *fallen* beings, the chief feature in their worship, and in the means of their recovery. There never was any form of religion, whether true or false, in which this fact, at least, was not admitted, and prominently acted upon. Philosophy may have discarded prayer; but religion ever clings to it, is based upon it, is reared and consummated by it. But prayer is not only the most appropriate and striking recognition of our fall; it is equally a recognition of our REDEMPTION. This great fact of all revelation, and substance of all truth, lies at the bottom of it. The primitive altar was a symbol of prayer, distinct from the office of invocation itself, which always accompanied the offering of sacrifice. But vicarious offering was itself *the* prayer; the blood cried to God from the ground; and that cry, protracted through many ages, and finally uttered from the cross itself, is none other than the Scripture plea—"In wrath, remember mercy."

The whole gospel doctrine is, in fact, but one sublime and all-commanding prayer. The atonement itself may be resolved into this, as well as the whole office of Christ in heaven. Prayer is there sublimely embodied in the Lamb slain; wrath and mercy are shown in those ever-living wounds which He bears; and the event which they publish in heaven, is the one grand plea for the world,—"In wrath, remember mercy." Thus the cry of earth is only the echo of heaven's own voice on man's behalf; the oracle of that highest sanctuary and everlasting priesthood enshrined on earth. It is its proper human counterpart

and response, as in that fine Scripture the bride is represented as repeating the call of the Spirit to the world—"Come." Thus prayer becomes the mystic ladder, which joins both worlds; by it our wants ascend to heaven, and blessings descend on us in return. At each extreme, *prayer* holds sovereignty. It is not only taught us in the word, but breathed into us by the Spirit; who, according to the symbolic action of the Saviour on his disciples, after his resurrection, is the very breath and soul of the Church. He cannot but be a praying Spirit in his saints, who reveals a praying Saviour in the heavens; and thus harmonizes every emotion in the human breast, with the glorious askings of the Man within the veil. This union is the discovered bond of prayer's omnipotency; its arm is thus made bare as the Lord's, and not man's only; while it shows to us the ground of its New Testament eminency, being collated with, and perfected by, the Name of Christ, the Divine intercessor for mankind. This insures its unlimited prevalency. It cannot fail. Its league and covenant with God in Christ are immutable; and the full conviction of this truth is the one thing necessary to give omnipotency to faith, and salvation to the world. Christianity began with this truth, and it must continue and end with it. Not only does its economy embody it, but its work demands it. The full enthronement of the doctrine of prayer gives it a glorious completeness of adaptation to its end, and a sovereign sufficiency to work it out. It can never retrograde or stand still, with such a charter to plead, with such resources always at command. If it cannot move men at any time, it can move God. If it be ever baffled in its efforts to influence agencies proper for its work, it can at once take a loftier range, and take hold of His strength, with whom nothing is impossible.

The doctrine of prayer implies the highest grant of sovereignty to man. It stands alone in glory, as a delegation of power to the Church for the performance of its great

work. As its necessity is grounded on the helplessness of man, and its exercise implies the diversion of his powers, from the *visible* to the *Invisible;* so its strength lies in that, which to man seems weakness, and its successes are derived from a source which he deems chimerical. The characteristic difference between the principles of the world and those of religion is, that the one regard *man only;* the other, God in man. To the one, the immediate and the visible represents the total of the agency, computed for an event; to the other, it is but the *vehicle* of the real agency put forth,—only the hand, which at once reveals and hides the power of God. The import of the Messiah's name embodies the whole work of his religion:—"God with us;" but the fulness of it, practically considered, is combined with prayer. Every constituted relation and office, grafted on the great mystery itself, is brought into efficacy and fruitfulness by it. It is the chief practical truth of religion, under every dispensation; giving unity and perfection to the whole.

Looking at the entire economy of revealed religion, it becomes remarkable, that every part of it bears special reference to this fact; and that its sublimest discoveries, so far from diminishing the importance, or hiding the glory of prayer, throw all their lustre upon it. The ground, and the prerogatives of prayer, appear in this "marvellous light" with surpassing evidence. God delights in it as the chief offering of public and private piety. He prescribes and enforces it, in forms of address, and with motives to compliance, in which His majesty, wisdom, and condescension, are singularly manifested. He has not only made prayer an everlasting ordinance for man, but has combined with it the omnipotency of his all-restoring word. He has not only spoken out its prerogatives from above, in a voice which all generations of men may hear; he has engraven it upon the portals of his Church, as upon those of his ancient sanctuary,—"My house shall be called a house

of prayer for all nations." It waves on the banner he has given to his sacramental host, to be displayed before all people. While every other mode of communication with himself has been closed, and the epochs of interposition have passed away, this remains open: and to this, as the true ephod of the Church, responses are uniformly given—to the seeking soul, and seeking Church alike.

Prayer alone detects the unseen mercy-seat, which is the refuge of the oppressed, and to which every form of misery betakes itself. Prayer sets forth the whole doctrine and grace of the kingdom of heaven, and is the key to every outlet of its healing munificence. It answers to the breadth of the promises, and to the length of the purposes of God in man's redemption, and the world's existencc. It is no more a *limiting* ordinance to man, than it is a partial one; its very basis is human insufficiency; its object is the Infinite One. It extends to the whole circle of human interests and human needs, stopping short of no good proper to our capacity, relations, and prospects. It is less difficult to sum up the *events* of prayer, than to assign its prescriptional efficacy, which is expended over the recent, and over the ancient past alike; and will be equally over the future, whether proximate or remote. It gathers force from the expending ages of the world's existence; and is, like the ministry of angels, mighty, though unseen. Nay, it is greater than any power of the creature—than the collective agency of them all, because the object which it grasps is Deity. It is neither a natural, nor a moral force, resident in our constitution, or our relation to God; it *is solely the charter of grace*, and as marvellous as every other fact which that economy reveals. Under certain conditions, it regulates the mind and policy of God toward the world. It can not only mitigate judgments, but avert them. Its preventive influence is incalculable; while its direct benedictions are wafted over all lands. It can place nations

under a special tutelage, and add riches of benignity to the constituted powers of even material nature.

Without ascribing to prayer, in general, the office of superseding, or even suspending, the established order of nature, its scope is, nevertheless, left sufficiently wide to modify its workings and results. A Pagan fatalism, or Atheistic necessity, precludes all prayer, inasmuch as it implies a *negation of a governing wisdom, and will, in the affairs of men;* but the philosophy that springs from a true theology must ever uphold its prerogatives, because it discerns a wide field left open for their exercise, and, because it connects all providential dispensations with moral ends. Nor can the Book which unfolds the doctrine and the ordinance of prayer, be other than the record of its mighty acts. It could hardly exhibit a bare dogma, without examples illustrative of its results. Its annals, in both Testaments, reflect its glory. Warriors in the field, statesmen in their councils, and kingdoms in their deliverances, have shared its benefits, and acknowledged them, in sacrifices and in songs. The monarch, the priest, the prophet, and the saint, have all held fellowship in its mystery and its triumphs. Inspiration itself has waxed more lofty, as *its* voice has been lifted up, and visions of the future have flashed upon the man of God, as his prayer told in heaven. Even to the Son of God were "the heavens opened," and the Dove descended, as he prayed, and "the fashion of his countenance was changed," in the sight of his disciples. The very dawn of Pentecost was hallowed by the fragrance of this oblation, and the way of the Spirit prepared, by the breathings of the disciples after the promise. Nor can time itself ever obliterate the record of those matins of the gospel-day, or cancel the force of their answers. They live through all its hours, and are supplemented by every following generation of the living church.

Christianity is, indeed, essentially the religion of prayer:

its nature, offices, and history, all testify this. Its whole crown of blessing is suspended on prayer. Personal redemption is wrought out by it; perseverance and perfection are its last and precious fruits. Its power is substantiated by every new instance of conversion; it is the anointing of every new member of the Church, whose offices are all designed to give embodiment to this one element, and to insure their mightiest ministry before the throne of grace. It gives unction to the ministry, and victory to the truth. While it fosters the virtues, it tests the spirit of the Church; equally preparing it for enterprise and blessing. Prayer is not only the first of Christian duties, but the most glorious of Christian privileges. Like faith, it claims Christ Jesus as its Author and Finisher. Prayer, too, as well as faith, is enthroned in Him. Issuing from His mediation, it is its human perfection. It is put into the same golden censer with the incense of His own merits, and blended with His intercession, as the most precious revenue of earth. It is the voice, which even He utters as his own plea; speaking sovereignly, though suppliantly, amidst the thick darkness, in which his own censer wraps the Paternal Throne, and invoking ordinances which career without resting, till they have changed the face of the world.

As every age exhibits, in some respects, new characteristics of the moral condition and bearings of humanity; so the Church has its corresponding position to take, and duties to perform: but the demand for *prayer* seems to admit no variation. The watch-tower must never be forsaken, nor this divine remembrancer ever cease to utter its cry. Both earth and heaven join in the demand, that this daily offering and oblation should never cease. The Church must neither live on the prayers of the past, nor on those of the future; on the prayers of the dead, nor of those who are yet to live. While it anticipates, it must *continue*, leaving it to the future to complement; thus, like David, serving each "generation according to the will of

God." And, verily, if there ever was an age, in which this duty was less than paramount, this distinction belongs not to our own: for, if the scope of prayer be regarded as coincident only with the dominion of Christ in the world, as His own prayer would intimate, its work is hardly begun; and that silence would be SIN, which should prevene the final Sabbath of PRAISE.

But if this be the one great theme of intercession to the elect, as it is indeed the fulness of divine promise to the Church, the whole series of intermediate events must stand related to it; nor should the going forth from the heavenly sanctuary of the seven angels, having the "seven last plagues," nor the alighting of burning coals upon the earth, accompanied by thunders and lightnings, which appal the world, oppress, or deject, the servants of God. He may shake the earth, and rend the heavens, when their cry comes before Him; and, the same censer which had just discharged its incense, may receive its answers, in stores of burning vengeance for the world. Before mercy, judgment may come forth; trouble may be the harbinger of peace; and the deluge sweep over the earth, ere the olive branch is seen.

The present are not ordinary times; whether the condition and bearings of the human mind are considered, or the administration of God, in the visible actings of His providence. Long since has he rested from those material and mundane operations; those grand breakings forth of Omnipotency, the records of which are graven on the whole superfice of our globe. All the warfare and riot of these awful forces, his almighty voice has, for ages innumerable, hushed into profoundest peace. His every order of creature is silently, but perfectly conserved; his every law of governance upheld, with inviolable precision. Time runs its course, and the covenant of day and night is unbroken. Even the ages of sensible interposition, and physical miracle, are, like those of creation, shrouded in the darkness of the

distant past; and beam forth in the record, only as stars in the firmament, awaiting the last morn of millennial times. But the contracted sphere within which Deity is now pleased to operate—even the existing manhood of creation—is, by this very fact, rendered the theatre of greater wonders. The simply circumstantial and preparatory scenes of the world's history are over. The great measures for its recovery have been taken; constitutions of rule *for all time* have been settled. Everything strange has ceased, and the visibly supernatural been withdrawn; but progression, Heaven's great law of consummation, cannot fail; nor the agencies sink into slumber, by which all things are impelled toward the goal. Even monotonous seasons are expressive. They address both our reason, and our faith; they are but prognostics of coming scenes, of greater interest; as the silence, which was in heaven "for the space of half an hour," omened the extraordinary events of the last seal, and the fulfilment of the "mystery of God."

But while it is true, that in the agency and fortunes of men, God is most strikingly manifest, and the lessons of a lofty wisdom are plentifully scattered on the past track of human existence; yet are these treasures ever augmenting, by new experiences in the application of great principles to fresh facts. These are seasons especially inviting both to *review* and *anticipation.* Attention is awakened by events, as remarkable for their magnitude, as their number and variety. They are widely diffused, but intimately connected; and almost as simultaneous, as if they were but mechanical effects. One stroke of a central power, seems to thrill through the living mass, invisible as the fluid, which, from the electric wire, makes its shock felt at the same instant, through the whole of our frame. Convulsion and paroxysm seize upon society, as upon Saul, when an evil spirit from God troubled him. Headlong frenzy sweeps the mind of nations, as if a fiery torch were flung among them.

Movement is everywhere rife. The fruit of seeds long sown becomes suddenly matured; and, like the harvest-sheaf, yields the seed of future crops. The world's mind seems to have outgrown the moulds and habits which had previously restricted it—it is disenchanted and free; yet is that very freedom but that of the evil spirit, going "through dry places, seeking rest and finding none;" and, like it, rather taking seven other spirits, worse, not better than itself.

The throes and changes of society, considered in themselves, are little else than new revelations of human depravity; and the line is only cast deeper into the abyss, to certify the impression that it is *unfathomable*. Yet, in all these phases of our fall, we are not to overlook the features of God's rule in man, and that this long and perplexing experiment on our common nature holds steady alliance with the purposed triumph of healing measures. The more active and expanding the mind of the world becomes, the more is there of God in it; though the impressions of this fact may become more faint to the world itself, and the downfall of the empire of false religions may seem to threaten the existence of the true. Nor, perhaps, was there ever a day when the assertion and collision of principles was so bold and energetic, as in our own; when evil was so well disciplined, or presented so may points of subtle, and well-defined array, against the march of truth; when men were either so well prepared, or so eager, to enter the lists against it, not more as it stands opposed to the sovereignty of reason, than as it frowns upon the irresponsible and licentious temper of the age. Never, possibly, before, were human activities and aspirings so powerful, and so manifold; never were they in more danger of breaking away altogether, from the guidance of religion and the influence of the Christian Church. Never had the Church a wider field thrown open to her enterprise, nor ever one beset with greater difficulties. Never were the

tendencies of society to discard supernatural aid more manifest; never were the demands for it louder, when the results of all merely human effort to advance the happiness of the world are considered. In this point of view, prayer is a yet more urgent duty, than even the best sustained endeavour; holiness is more needed than enterprise, and the purification of the Church than the extension of her territory. Prayer must be our great safeguard from the virulence of surrounding contagion, as well as the highest power which can be put forth, when we essay the removal of mountains; and, however we may dread the voice of God, in judicial visitations of unwonted severity, we should be much more dismayed at the loss of his presence in the Church. "Yea," says one, "in the way of thy judgments have we waited for thee." However terrible the path from which the manifold forms of destruction issue, the feet of saints may stand upon it; it is *safe* as well as holy ground. They wait for God when men, panic-stricken, flee from Him; as in the opening of the sixth seal, they are said to hide themselves "in the dens, and the rocks of the mountains." They wait for God, till, the cycle of His judgments being complete, the career of his beneficence is resumed, and the progress of his policy is seen to enlarge and exalt his Church. They who wait for God, transfer the principles and experiences of personal life to the collective life of the world. Every fact and intimation of the divine government speaks its unity and its progression: these demand, and in some respects *reveal*, the future. The song of the Church, of "mercy and judgment," belongs to more than time. It is the response of the entire economy of the world, uttered by minds sublimated by divine intelligence and love. It is the song of salvation, as it ascends from earth and heaven together; seeing that "mercy and judgment" supply its every moral element, and unfold themselves alike in the history of individuals, and of the world at large. Neither mercy nor judgment can be built up

singly: their incorporation is their strength; their blending is the perfection of the administration of redemption; and the temple, which they rear and consecrate, shall bear equally their impress and glory forever.

When a prophet delivers it, that "the just shall live by his faith," he may be said to have given us a great compendium both of truth and saintship. It declares that a believer in whatever truths God has made known, and in whatever degree he is in his soul what the name imports, is to be ranked amongst the just, not merely in the sight of men, but much more in the sight of God. It informs us how he becomes so, as well as the characteristic mould which his being takes, and the bearings of it upon all surrounding and related objects. The just man is the creature of faith: he lives by it, as by a parental power—a cause graciously disposed within the soul by its Author, and immediately subordinated to his own all-quickening Spirit, itself the fruit of "the free gift" which brings "justification unto life." Springing out of this, as a federal preveniency, a general dowry of redemption, it appropriates all its treasures. The truth, as the word of omnipotent grace, raises up the soul in power, and directs it to an immediate union with the Redeemer's fulness. Hence the man lives as "just," because justified by faith; his relation and his nature are changed together. The breath of his being is henceforth "from on high;" his soul's origin is attested with power; and its own world, as a spirit, is re-opened to it by the might of that baptism which has restored its fellowship with God. The deposition of sense from its sovereignity, and the crucifixion of the flesh, are the behests of faith. It is not only spiritual, it is spiritualizing: it rears up its own dominion within us; it begets a new condition and direction of mind; revealing God to the soul, it reveals the *soul to itself.* It creates all its diviner instincts, persuasions, tastes, and marshals every moral law of manhood after God, as its archetype and end; which, as it now

stands related to him, is as our bodily nature to the soul—a development of his beauty, and an instrument of his power. Faith is *nutritive* and *perfecting*, not originative only. If it awake new senses in the soul, it furnishes them with new objects. Deeper wants are met with corresponding satisfactions; the yearnings of the spiritual birth find their proper good in their union with the power which created them. To live by faith, is to draw breath, health, and high-toned action from it. It shares the mystery of those natures which have growth to perfection planted in them—a law bound up in life itself, adding to its measure till it attain its predestinated bound. The progressions of nature do but symbolize the life of faith. Sanctification is but this power arrayed in light, purer than the heavens, the image and glory of Him that filleth all things. All the virtues are but its varied hues, thrown from the prism of individual and collective character. Faith rescinds the code of the world, or so alters and amends it, as to bring it into subjective harmony with its own; itself measured by the Word, it is a measure to all things else—a heavenly balance in which all thing are weighed—a divine test to try "the things that differ."

To live by faith is the whole practice and philosophy of religion; it opens a path which none but believers see, and none but believers walk in. Faith links together worlds which otherwise would bear no known affinity, and unfolds relations and interests to man, from which all other conditions of his being shut him out. This power alone can irradiate the Bible, and make its divinity as thoroughly a *conscious* thing, as are the perfections of its Author. It takes the Scripture as the sure witness and exponent of what has been, is, and shall be. Faith makes our moral consciousness prophetic; its *sympathies and counterparts are all involved in the objects of the future.* The past, or the *now* of religion, cannot comprise the whole reason of its existence, or the patrimony of its principles. While the past has sup-

plied the facts of its history, the epochs of its administration include an unknown space, and its issues are eternal. To live by faith is to expand to the full dimensions of our own being, and of all kindred things, as fixed and declared by Almighty God. It is as a point from which an endless line may be drawn, or the widest circumference described. Faith is the eye looking into that of the INFINITE, unveiled in the midst of the darkness that envelopes all things. It is the ear receptive of oracles amidst all nature's deathlike silence. It is a divination, fetched neither from the heavens, nor the earth, but from Him that made them both. Its prognostics are as independent of every form of science, "falsely so called," as they are of the darkest forms of superstition. Faith's vaticinations are all aloof from those of the astrologer, the necromancer, the soothsayer. It neither burrows in the grave, nor in the cavern, nor ascends to dwell among the stars. It is indeed *above reason, but never below it;* it disenchants it of a whole host of evil spells; it raises it above the regions of the mist and phantom, to make it radiant with eternal truth, like the woman seen by the prophet of Patmos, "clothed with the sun."

When, therefore, it is said, "the just shall live by his faith," it signifies, that from the beginning there has been extant a race of prophetic men—men who drew their principles and their destiny from heaven; men who visibly represented the redeeming counsels of God toward the world. These intently gazed upon the dark and distant future, and threw themselves into the deepest of its shades, as being one with the pathway of their own being. Their own divine anticipations, even almost apart from prophecy, were the offspring of their own heaven-born principles; faith necessarily pointing to an after-life to this, a condition of objective realization of the idea which itself had created. It brings all the assurance of a fact, without its implied reasons or philosophy; a settled presentiment of destiny, without so much as *guessings at what it shall be,* because now sub-

sisting in the divine mind only. Faith is a grand antecedent fact in experience, as yet solitary, and subsisting amidst nothing but anomalies and contradictions to itself. It has its reason in something *real*, however recondite, as the magnet in the pole, however distant; and the just man's life is set to it, and his voyage is ruled by it, whatever be his haven and his home.

Hence its transference to the destinies of the world of men, is as simple as to its own; and the impossibilities which sense and reason lay as mountains in its way, are as readily dissolved as mists by the sun, or as clouds by the breeze. The faith which has already guided its subject into the land of the living, which inspires with a conviction that impending dissolution is but an opaque transit to an illustrious being, and the state of death, but precursor to the glorification of the whole man, cannot quail before the antagonisms which forbid the world's regeneration. *The personal and the general object of faith, are bound together in the plan and progress of human restitution.* They belong to the same system of rule, they are in line with each other, they advance together; the work of God in the MAN, and the work of God in the WORLD, bear a similar relation and proportion to each other, that a stone does to an entire building, or a subject to the masses of a mighty empire. *Hence, the wider anticipations of faith are never severed from the doctrine of facts, nor its grand generalization from the just inductions of spiritual self-existence.* An individual, or a pair, may contain a model, and a prophecy of a whole world of men to come; and faith may be to the coming restitution, what the monad was to the universe, in the purest pagan wisdom, —*its parent principle.* The very style of those prophecies which it adopts as divinely consonant with itself, shows that they are but events antedated, but the august voice from the throne which John heard, saying, "It is done." As the first world was but the echo of an Almighty voice, so shall the second spring forth from the promise as its seed.

The *consummation* only is registered: but all progressions are included in it; and all events which time past may have evolved, or time future may bring forth, combine to foreshadow and assure it. His work will appear to his servants, and his glory to their children. The magnificent imagery of Habakkuk's ode, cannot be compressed within the limits of a nation or an age. The brightness of Jehovah's glory, when, marching from Teman unto Paran, he bowed the mountains, and scattered the nations; when Cushan's tents were in affliction, and Midian's habitations trembled; when He dried up the rivers, parted the sea, and commanded the sun and moon to halt in their courses; when He moved onward with his hosts, and the bow, and the chariot, the spear, and the sword, hurled destruction on the foe, and for the salvation of his people; *these could not have been historical references only,* even though no hyperboles, on the events of glorious yore. The *history itself was but a parable,* and therefore the basis of a prophecy; which, however various, is like clouds all coloured by the same sun, and vaulted by the same sky.

It is the song of salvation, which, if it appertained to Moses, does much more to the Lamb. He who personally verifies his own golden words, "the just shall live by his faith," when he says, "I will joy in the God of my salvation," surely could not set his muse to an earthly strain; nor could these lofty words be a designed apostrophe from something without consonancy,—alien, poor, but a *climax* in the march of this inspired ode; a chorus, burst from this divine minstrelsy, in which all the prophets join; and in which, according to John's revelation, heaven and earth shall at length antiphonize. For what is the vision which saints desiderate, and faith assures, but that of conflicts raging throughout the world, and over ages and generations?—of judgments, by which God declares the power of His wrath, breaking nations in pieces, and scattering desolation over the world, till the wickedness and hopelessness of rebellion

against Christ become manifest? What but that of the tranquillizing and blissful end of all struggles and woes, when the kingdoms shall have become the Lord's; and His church, arrayed in glory, shall stand prepared for the consummating hour of his final advent? What mean the sea of glass, clear as crystal, which surrounds the throne, and on which stand the harpers with their golden harps, and the tabernacle opened for the entrance of all nations, and the glorious scenes of a catholic worship? Can these images signify anything but the pacification of the world as the fruit of religion?—the waves sunk into eternal sleep, and the unclouded depths, out of which the Throne towers as a mountain, and casts its image over the whole; while every harper is a conqueror, and every note a pæan! And what further says the vision, but that worship is the LAST, as it was the FIRST office of man, and to bring in the priesthood and the Sabbath of redemption, the great work of mediatorial sway?

With the glimpses of a world refashioned, and reconstituted, the sublime draft of prophecy is concluded—the evening sun of our dwelling-place tints and mellows it with heaven. Unpolluted, it is undisturbed; transformed by the hand that moulded it, it is raised to be the seat of immortality and divine vision. It has passed through every era and form of probationary rule; it has at length reached the goal of its creation, beyond which all reverses are excluded. Its *eternal future* shall be, out of all proportion, brighter than its *past* has been dark. The deep swathings of its chaotic state are unloosed, which veiled the face of this final morning, whose dominion shall eschew sin, suffering, and the grave. The long enigmatic processes of experiment and discipline have run out. The character and conflict of principles are finished, and stamped with their own moral issues. In a word, THE HARVEST OF THE WORLD IS GATHERED!

THE END.

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